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## SHORT SERMONS.

By the same Author.

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# SHORT SERMONS:

*For Family Reading,*

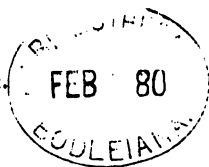
AND OTHER LIKE PURPOSES.

BY THE

REV. FRANCIS BOURDILLON, M.A.

AUTHOR OF 'BEDSIDE READINGS,' ETC.

Fourth Edition.



LONDON:  
HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY.  
1879.

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fifteen minutes in the reading ; to use such words as might be understood by all, avoiding abstruse ideas and involved sentences ; and to make the sermons pointed and practical. How far he has succeeded, others must judge.

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# SHORT SERMONS.

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## SERMON I.

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### THE HONEST ENQUIRER.

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JOHN, vii. 17.—‘If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.’

THE Jews were in great doubt about Christ. He said that He came from heaven, and was the Son of God; and there was much to make them believe it; for He spake as never man spake, and did many wonderful works. But, on the other hand, His birth and station were so low, His means of learning had been so small, and His circumstances altogether were so different from what the Jews had expected in their Messiah, that they were quite per-

plexed. Many of the people who were at Jerusalem at the feast came from Galilee, and had known Him there during His youth. They had seen Him living at Nazareth in a humble line of life, and in dutiful subjection to Mary and Joseph; it was difficult now to think of Him as one so great as He said He was; and how He could do such works and speak such words, they could not understand. 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He saith, I came down from heaven?' 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?'

These doubts and questions were well known to our Saviour, though most likely not spoken in His hearing. He answered them thus: 'My doctrine [or teaching] is not mine, but His that sent me.' And then He added, 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' If they could once understand and believe, that the words which struck them so much were not the words of the seemingly humble man who stood before them, but of God Himself, all their doubts and difficulties would be done away. This light

\* John, vi. 42; viii. 15.



He promised they should have, if they were honest and sincere : ‘ If any man will do His will [or, *is willing* to do His will] he shall know of the doctrine.’ The honest enquirer should not be left in doubt. The man who wished to do God’s will, and sought to know the truth, only that he might follow it,—that man should know ; God would teach him, blindness and prejudice should be taken away, his mind should become fully convinced, his honest desire should be satisfied. Such was the meaning of the text, as applied to the Jews.

We also are sometimes perplexed about religion, especially those of us who have not much experience or learning ; and that, not on one subject only, such as that which caused a difficulty to the Jews, but on various points. Some say one thing, and some another ; who is to know which is true ? People even go to the Bible, and take the very same words, and one says they mean this, and another that ; how is a plain man to know the right from the wrong ?

Our Lord’s words meet the case. ‘ If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.’ If any one, however plain and unlearned, has his heart set upon God and really

desires to serve Him, that man shall not be left in ignorance. God will take him into His own teaching. Dark things will by degrees become plain, doubts and difficulties will be cleared, the Gospel will be seen and felt to come from God, the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and offices will be more clearly known, and the mind will become settled in the truth. Some difficulties there still will be, and some points on which good men will differ; but the main points will be clear, the way of salvation will not be hidden, and the honest searcher after truth will not be left in doubt how he is to walk and to please God. Thus the text applies to us as well as to the Jews; and a very comforting text it is.

Of course there must be *diligence* on our part. We must not expect to have this knowledge without seeking. Indeed our Lord's words seem to imply diligence: 'If any man *will* do His will,' that is, if any man be willing and desirous to do it. Now, such a man uses all possible means to know what the will of God is. His Bible does not gather dust on the shelf, or lie hidden in the chest; his place in church is seldom empty—never when he can help it; and every day finds him on his knees

before God. Thus he seeks, and not in vain. The promise is fulfilled to him. He is taught of God by the Spirit. He gains a deeper insight into spiritual things. He grows 'in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' \*

For this is a *growing* knowledge ; it does not come all at once. The blind man, whom Jesus cured at Bethsaida, saw things at first all dim and confused : ' I see men as trees, walking ;' but when Jesus put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up, then he saw every man clearly.† So it is with spiritual sight. The mind, when first enlightened by the Spirit of God, sees things unseen before, but sees them dimly. Already the change is great, for there is light instead of darkness ; but the change is not complete, the light is not clear, the objects are confused. The man cannot see the meaning of all he finds in the Bible, and sometimes one doctrine seems not to agree with another. But as he grows in grace and knowledge, he sees more clearly. He is like a child at school, learning something fresh every day. Indeed he *is* at school,—a learner in the school of God. The book he chiefly learns

\* 2 Pet. iii. 18.

† Mark, viii. 22–26.

from is the Bible ; his teachers are various,—the ministers of God, Christian friends, God's providential dealings ; but, most of all, the Holy Spirit teaching his heart.

We shall be learners in this school to our dying day ; the time will never come when we shall be able to say, ' I know all.' The oldest Christian, and the most experienced in spiritual things, is a learner still. Many have learnt more on a bed of death, than they ever learnt before ; and many a dying Christian, long a scholar in the school of God, has found his *last* lessons the deepest and clearest.

The promise of the text applies not only to difficulties in religious belief, but also to difficulties as to conduct. Sometimes a man is brought into such circumstances, that he is in doubt as to what he ought to do. The path of duty is not plain. He does not see his way before him. In whatever direction he turns, some hindrance seems to meet him. In such a case he may take to himself this promise, ' If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.' If his mind be really set upon doing the will of God, he shall be taught what that will is. By some means or other (for here also means must be used) guidance

shall come. The question, honestly asked, 'Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?' is one that God will not leave without an answer.

I said that means must be used. In every case of doubt or difficulty, we are bound to make use of all the means and powers which God has given us. We must not fold our arms and sit still, as if expecting that an angel will be sent from heaven to direct us, or that in some other unusual way God will make known His will. God has given us, in some measure at least, thought, knowledge, experience, friends; and these means must not be neglected. We must think over the subject in all its bearings; we must ask advice of those friends whose principles and wisdom we esteem; we must exercise our own judgment; we must make diligent use of all the means in our power. Then, we may humbly look for God's guidance. The inspired writer does not tell us not to *use* our understanding, but only not to *lean* upon it! 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.' \*

\* Prov. iii. 5, 6.

The great question is,—Have we indeed this honest desire to do the will of God? Are we willing to do it, whatever it may be? Not only if it agrees with our own, but even if His will and ours be directly opposed. It is to be feared, that many read the Bible, and even pray to be taught and led, with their minds already made up as to what they will believe and what they will do, instead of humbly coming to learn. This is not the way to be taught of God. A child does not come so, to be taught by its parent. We must come to God prepared, if need be, to give up our own will, to part with old opinions and prejudices, to keep nothing back; honestly desiring this one thing, to know and to do the will of God. It is a great point,—this uprightness and honesty in religion, this spirit of sincere enquiry. There is no guidance, no comfort, no peace, to be expected without it. All the promises of God are made to such seekers as these, and to such alone. *They shall 'know of the doctrine;'* they shall be more and more turned from the love of their own will to the love of God's will. He will direct their path, because in all their ways they acknowledge Him; the means of grace shall be blest to

their souls ; God will guide them with His counsel, and afterward receive them to glory.\*

Look well into your own hearts, examine the thoughts and feelings with which you are accustomed to read the Bible, to hear sermons, to seek light and guidance ; and see whether you have this honest desire to know and to do the will of God. Guard against a disputatious spirit, and against all insincerity before the all-seeing eye. The man who uses the truth of God merely as a subject to dispute about, is little likely to know what that truth is : even if his understanding be enlightened, his heart will be dark. And the person who seeks God's guidance in difficulty, with his mind already made up, must not expect his steps to be directed from above : for he is in reality seeking, not to know the will of God, but to have his own will confirmed. 'The heart is deceitful above all things :'+ we are apt to fancy we only wish to know the truth, when we are in fact wedded to our own opinion ; and to suppose we seek the guidance of God, when we are all the while bent upon following our own will. Let us seek to have our Saviour's words graven on our hearts, as the very guide and pattern of all feelings and desires, 'If

\* Ps. lxxiii. 24.

† Jer. xvii. 9.

any man will do His will.' Let us ask of God simplicity of mind, a child-like spirit, a humble and teachable disposition, and a will conformed to His will. And let us, in all sincerity, join in the prayer of the Psalmist, 'Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.'\*

\* Ps. cxliii. 10.



## SERMON II.

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### THE HOLY SCRIPTURES:

#### PART I.

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ROMANS, xv. 4.—‘Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.’

It often happens that when a good thing becomes cheap and common, it is held in less esteem. Perhaps this applies in some measure to the Word of God. Formerly Bibles were scarce and dear, and there were not many people who could read. In those days, the Church Bible was often the only one in the parish; and it was the custom to chain it to the desk, lest any one should take it away. People used to go to church to hear it read; and it was no uncommon thing, on week-days as well as Sundays, for a little company

of men and women to gather round the desk, while one more learned than the rest read aloud from the Bible. Now things are very different. Every one may have a Bible of his own; and most can read. The poor man's cottage is not thought complete without a Family Bible: and even in these days of cheap books, there is hardly any book so cheap as the Bible. This is a great blessing; yet perhaps the Bible was more thought of when it was not so cheap and common. It is not unlikely, that the people who had to come to the church and hear another read out of a chained book, the only Bible in the parish, prized the Bible more than many now-a-days, who have a Bible of their own at home, and can read it whenever they like.

I do not say this is right. Far from it: it is very wrong. But I fear it is very much the case. Certain it is, that the Bible is greatly neglected by numbers. And many, who would not like to be without a Bible in the house, might almost as well be without one, for any use they make of it. This is very wrong. The Bible was not given to be treated thus. It ought to be thought one of the chief blessings of our country and our time, that the

word of God is, or may be, in every hand, and that almost all can read it.

Our text is about the Holy Scriptures. There is too much matter in it for one short sermon. But, as it has two distinct parts, we will take the first part now, and the second in the next sermon.

The first part is this; 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.'

'Whatsoever things were written aforetime.' This means, Whatsoever things were written aforetime *in the Bible*, not in other books. Now, the Bible consists of two parts, the Old Testament and the New. The Old Testament was written before Christ came, the New afterwards. But *all* is equally the Word of God. Many writers were engaged in it, and at many different times, but the same Holy Spirit inspired them all. We might gather this even from the text. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime:' this takes in all the writings of the different authors of the Bible,—Moses, David, the prophets, and so forth; and the words that follow, 'Were written for our learning,' show *one* object in all; as if the various writers were so many workmen, each

doing his appointed part, but all taught and directed by One Master, all carrying out one design and will. But this is more plainly taught elsewhere. 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,'\* writes St. Paul to Timothy. And St. Peter says, 'The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'† Thus the Bible is God's book. Men held the pen, and wrote the words, but God gave the thoughts. This is inspiration.

By 'whatsoever things were written aforetime,' St. Paul meant all that part of the Bible which was written before *his* time. Now this was the Old Testament only. For though much of the New Testament was already written, at the time when St. Paul wrote this Epistle to the Romans, yet there was more to come, and what *was* written was not yet gathered together into a book. The Bible *then* was the Old Testament only, and this is what the apostle meant.

All this, he says, was written for our learning, or to teach us: to teach, not merely himself and those who lived in his time, but *us*, and all

\* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

† 2 Pet. i. 21.

other people in every age. Many who read the Bible, are not aware how very old a book it is. Some parts of it were written more than three thousand years ago. Even in St. Paul's time, these were very ancient writings; now they are much more ancient. And yet we have them to this very day, just as they were written so many years ago, only translated into our own language. Through all the generations that have come and gone, through all the changes that have taken place in the world, through wars, and conquests, and tumults, and troubles, these books have still been preserved. The hand of God has been in this. They must have been lost or altered long ago, but for His care. It is He who has kept the Bible for us to this day. This is of His goodness. This alone is enough to show us that He had us in view when the Bible was written.

But we are expressly told so here. The Bible was written 'for our learning.' Those ancient books of the Old Testament were meant to teach even us, who live so long after they were written. We are not to think of them merely as histories and writings, wonderfully preserved through many ages, and interesting on account of their age; but as containing lessons for our instruc-

tion. No part is to be passed over, as if it did not concern us. There is something to be learnt from every page. And it is striking to observe, as if placed there on purpose to teach us this, some solemn exhortation or some striking example, in the midst of a plain narrative, or even of a list of names. Nothing that is found in the Word of God is without its importance to us.

But though the text, as written by St. Paul, refers to the Old Testament only, there can be no doubt that it applies equally to the New. The New Testament is as much the Word of God as the Old. The writers of the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation, were as much inspired by God, as Moses, and David, and the other writers of the Old Testament: and all they wrote was written with the same object,—to teach us, ‘for our learning.’ So that we, in our day, may apply the words to the whole Bible, as St. Paul in his applied them to that part of the Bible which was then written: ‘Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.’

Now, considering all this, is the Bible prized as it ought to be? It is the Word of God, it was written to teach us, and it has been pre-

served from age to age, as no other book has been : do we value it accordingly ?

If there were no other book in the world, it would be reason enough why all should learn to read, that they might be able to read the Bible. Let the young consider this, and those especially who have not much means of learning. It is worth all the pains you can take, to have the power of reading God's word for yourselves all through your life. Many older persons wish now they had thought so, when young like you. They can now see, what a blessing it would have been to be able to read the Bible. Yet even to such I would say, it may not be too late even now. I have known many grown-up men and women begin their A B C, in order that they might read the Bible. Even to be able to spell out an easy chapter for oneself, is a great comfort and blessing, and worth much pains.

To those who *can* read, I would say this, consider it the very best and fittest use you can make of your reading, to read the Bible. There are many good and useful books in the world, as well as many idle and bad ; but there is no book like the Bible. *They* are all men's books,

*this* is God's. They have been written with various objects,—to inform and amuse; and some, it is true, to teach about God: but not as the Bible teaches. The Bible was written with one object—to teach us. And to teach us what? The way of life, the way to God, the way to heaven. In other words, to show us our state as sinners, to reveal to us a Saviour, to declare to us the way of salvation, to lead us to faith, and holiness, and heaven, to teach us how to be happy. Other books, as was said just now, have been written to teach the same things; but not as the Bible teaches. This Book speaks with authority, as from God Himself. Here is God's teaching, not man's. There is no other book of which this can be said. The Bible stands alone.

Whatever else you read then, let the reading of the Bible have the first place. You may read other writings for religious instruction and comfort, for information on other things, to keep yourselves acquainted with the passing events of the day, and even for mere amusement; there is no harm in this, but good. But if you leave out the Bible from your list, you are not right. Then you are not making a proper use



of your power of reading. You are spending it all on books of man, and neglecting the book of God.

Read the Bible. Read it every day. In palace or in cottage, let the Bible be the best-read book in the house. Let there be no dusty Bible on the shelf, and no unused Bible in the chest. Let your Bible be a book for daily use. Read it, not as you read any other book, but as the Word of God; not for mere information or amusement, but as the Book of Life, to teach and impress the heart. Strive to carry out the beautiful words of the Collect for the second Sunday in Advent, which is taken from our text: 'Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by patience, and comfort of Thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.' *Hear* the Scriptures diligently, both read, and preached from. What a comfort it is for those who cannot read, that at least they can *hear*! *Read* the Scriptures in private. And that, not carelessly, or as a task, but *marking* well what you

read. Seek to *learn* from them. And lastly, *inwardly digest* what you read. That is, let it remain in your mind, and think over it again and again, that it may turn to the good of your souls, as well-digested food nourishes the body. If you have little time for reading, think the more. One verse seriously read and well thought over, will do more good than a whole chapter read carelessly, and dismissed from the mind as the book is closed. A labouring man has been known to learn a text by heart every morning before going to work, that he might think it over during the day. That was inwardly digesting the Scriptures. It is a good habit, thus to store the mind with Bible words, and employ the thoughts upon the Scriptures. David had this habit; 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.' 'O how I love Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.'\* This will take the place of vain thoughts, and even drive away vexation and anxiety.

Once more, read the Bible with prayer. It is God's message to our souls; but we want the Holy Spirit, to enable us to receive it aright. He alone can turn our darkness into light, and

\* Ps. cxix. 11, 97.

cause the word to reach our hearts. Let us never read it without prayer. Here again the Psalmist is our example, who prayed thus, 'Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.' \*

\* Ps. cxix. 18.

## SERMON III.

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### THE HOLY SCRIPTURES:

#### PART II.

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ROM. xv. 4.—‘Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.’

THE first part of the text was explained in the preceding sermon. It was there shown that the whole Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, was inspired by God, though the work of various writers; that it has been wonderfully preserved to us from ancient times; and that it was written for our learning, that is, to teach us true religion.

This was the general object. But a more particular object is mentioned in the latter part of the text; ‘that we, through patience, and

comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.' This we will now consider.

It has already been said, that the Scriptures were meant to make us happy. But happy in a particular way. We learn here, that they were meant to give us that sort of happiness which springs from *hope*. It is the will of God, not that we should have all that is pleasant and delightful now, but rather that we should live in the constant hope of having it hereafter. Thus our true happiness here consists rather in hoping than in having; and the many comforts and blessings which are given us now are to be considered as a foretaste and pledge of those better things, which God has prepared for those who love Him, and the hope of which makes them happy already. The life of the Christian is meant to be a life of hope, and *therefore* a happy life.

But what hope is meant, when it is said, 'that we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope?' Is it hope in general—that feeling planted naturally in every heart, and never perhaps quite extinguished in any? Or is it something more precise and sure, the hope of some particular blessing?

The words might stand thus, '*the* hope,' in-

stead of 'hope' only ; in which case they would clearly point to some particular hope. I believe they do mean, not hope in general, but a particular hope ; and that is the hope of eternal life.

This hope is set before us throughout the Bible ; though not equally in every part. It appears faintly in the earlier books of the Old Testament, more clearly in the Psalms and in the Prophets, more clearly still in the Gospels and Acts, and plainly and fully in the Epistles and Revelation. There we see clearly what this hope is, and what it rests on ; that it is built entirely on Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Saviour, and is only to be had by a living faith in Him. There we learn, how it is to be maintained and increased. There we find it described, promised, prayed for. There we are exhorted to seek it for ourselves ; and there examples are held up to us of those who have had it. And once at least, in the case of Stephen, we see this hope carried out to the last, and the first Christian martyr is shown to us, actually dying in it, and passing from hope to enjoyment.\*

The object of all this is, that we also should

\* Acts, vii. 55-60.

lay hold on the hope that is set before us, and live in that hope continually; that we should no longer pass our life in a spirit of bondage, always doubting and fearing; but should fully believe God's promises in Christ, and simply rest in Him by faith, and thus live here in the joyful hope of a better and happier life with Him in the world to come, that will know no end. This is what the Bible is meant to teach us: 'that we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have *hope*.'

'Through *patience*.' It is through patience, that this hope is to be ours; and it is easy to see, how needful patience is to a life of hope. When we eagerly hope for anything, we are apt to be impatient of delay; we long to turn hoping into having: and, according to the Scriptural proverb, 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.'\* But grace mingles patience with the Christian's hope, and teaches him, with all his earnest desire after better things to come, patiently to await God's time; bearing what God lays upon him, and striving to do what God sets before him, and that, as long as it shall please God; yet hoping all the while. Many things happen to him, which of them-

\* Prov. xiii. 12.

selves might damp or even quench his hope ; disappointments, anxieties, cares, troubles, temptations. But Christian patience enables him to hope still. Without it, hope would fade and die in such a world as this ; but when patience has ' her perfect work,'\* then trials brighten hope instead of quenching it, and all fresh experience of God's gracious dealings does but increase the Christian's confidence in Him. The hand that chastens him, he feels, is still his Father's hand ; all that God does, whether in giving or withholding, he knows to be wise and good ; and if disappointment comes, he is sure it is best it should be so. In short, he finds the truth of what the Apostle Paul says, 'that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope ;' and it does not surprise him to see, that in the very same chapter, 'the God of hope' is called 'the God of patience and consolation' too.†

But patience alone is not enough to support hope. Or rather, both hope and patience would give way, were it not for the 'comfort of the Scriptures.' As the Bible was given us in order that we might have hope, so

\* Jam. i. 4.

† Rom. xv. 5, 13.



it is by continually drawing comfort thence, that our hope is to be maintained and increased. The Bible is meant for constant use; not merely to be read once, as a book containing a message or a piece of information, and then laid aside, but to be gone to again and again for fresh light and comfort. There is much weight and meaning in these words, 'comfort of the Scriptures;' for the Scriptures are full of comfort indeed. We can hardly open them in any part, without lighting on something that speaks hope and peace to the heart. And we stand in need of this; for the brightest hopes, in themselves, are not lasting; the most cheerful Christian is apt at times to despond. Circumstances have a great effect upon the feelings; bodily health, the conduct of those around us, and even the natural ebb and flow of the spirits, often make a total change in our state of mind; a single hour is enough to turn cheerfulness into gloom. At such times the Bible is an unfailing source of comfort. Whatever turn our despondency may take, we find *there* something to meet it. For instance, how well suited to revive hope are those words of St. Paul to Titus, 'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie,

promised before the world began :'\* and those other words in the next chapter, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.'† Or, if we open the Bible at the Old Testament, how cheering it is to read such words as these, 'But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel : Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine :'‡ or those remarkable words of Job, beginning, 'For I know that my Redeemer liveth.'§ And these are but samples taken at random. The Bible is full of such passages. Again and again do such words as these occur, 'Fear not ;' 'Be not afraid ;' 'I am with thee.' Sentences of hope and comfort are scattered throughout the sacred Book ; and mercy and pardon, grace and love, truth, faithfulness, hope, blessing, consolation, and salvation, are among its most common words. Above all, the Scriptures testify of CHRIST ; in every page of the New Testament that 'name which is above every name' appears, and He on whom our every

\* Titus, i. 2.

† Ib. ii. 13.

‡ Isa. xliii. 1.

§ Job, xix. 25.

hope is built is set forth for the assurance of our faith and the comfort of our hearts.

Thus, it is 'through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures' that we may have hope.

'Search the Scriptures'\* then. Of all the books you have, let your Bible be read the oftenest, and loved the best. Read it daily, diligently, prayerfully. Not as a task to be performed, but with a view to find a blessing there; especially *this* blessing, the hope of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Are you so happy as to have this hope already? Search the Scriptures, to have it made clearer, deeper, and stronger. Let nothing short of real necessity break in upon the daily habit of reading the Bible. At home or abroad, let this be a settled part of the employments of the day. And especially at times of darkness and despondency, when the natural spirits are low, and the feelings dull, and outward circumstances depressing,—then go to the Bible for comfort. Remember, the Scriptures were written for your learning, that you through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have *hope*. God is teaching you by His word and by His dealings. Your outward circum-

\*. John, v. 39.

stances, the very things that weigh upon your spirits, are part of His training. But He would have you be hopeful. Read and pray ; and ' the God of hope ' will hear your prayer, and cheer your heart by His word.

But are you as yet a stranger to the hope of the Gospel ? Then you should look on the Bible as the book from which you may get a blessing, which you have not yet, but which would make you happy indeed. However happy as to outward things, no one can be truly happy in his heart without a good hope in Jesus Christ. Would you have this blessing ? Seek it in the Word of God ; for there it is surely to be found. You may have no taste for the Bible at present ; yet read it nevertheless. The man who digs in the earth for gold, does it, not because he loves the labour, but because he desires the gold. Follow his example. Dig in this mine. There is treasure hidden here, far better than gold ; even ' the unsearchable riches of CHRIST.\* ' Come and seek them, not once or twice only, but every day. Search till you find, and then search on for more. Begin at once to read your Bible, and persevere in it. It will seem

\* Eph. iii. 8.

strange to you at first ; and often when the usual time comes, you will feel a wish to turn to something else instead. Do not give way to that feeling. Read on with diligence and attention, like one looking for something ; give your mind to it ; and pray to God to help you by His Holy Spirit. You will not read in vain. You will find what you seek. ‘Through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures,’ you will have hope ; you will find Him ‘of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth ;’\* you will learn to know and to love Him, as your Saviour ; and soon the reading of the Bible will be no longer a burden to you, but a delightful work, as it was to him who said, ‘Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.’†

\* John, i. 45.

† Ps. cxix. 24.

## SERMON IV.

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### FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

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LUKE, ii. 11.—‘ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’

PROPHETS and angels are both God’s messengers, and therefore what they say must agree. Prophets were generally sent long before the thing was to happen ; angels more often at the very time, or only shortly before.

Seven hundred years before these words were spoken by the angel, the prophet Isaiah had written thus, ‘ For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given ;’ \* and now the angel says, ‘ Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’ It was the same event, and the same person. The child born that day in the city of David,

\* Isa. ix. 6.

was the very child foretold by Isaiah. The angel and the prophet, though so many years apart, came on the same errand.

The text therefore shows us that the prophecy of Isaiah is a *fulfilled* prophecy. There is much fulfilled prophecy in Scripture ; and much hope and comfort does it bring us. For every prophecy fulfilled, is a pledge that all the rest will be fulfilled too. This child, promised so long before, was born at the appointed time. In like manner shall every word of God, in due time, be made good. There is not a blessing promised, that shall not be given.

In dwelling on this text, it will be interesting to compare with it the passage from Isaiah ; the prophecy, with the tidings or news.

1. In the prophecy, *many* titles were given to the child that was to be born, 'And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.'\* In the angel's message, but *one* title is given, 'a Saviour.' But that one title expresses even more clearly than all the rest, what Christ came to be to us, and to do for us. The name 'Saviour,' though but one word, speaks volumes;

\* Isa. ix. 6.

it is just the name to suit our case, and to comfort our hearts. The prophetic titles might have raised our expectations high ; we might have looked for great blessings from the coming of ' the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace ;' but this Gospel title shows us clearly, in what character, and with what object, He came. ' A Saviour ' means, One who saves ; the Mighty God, when He took our nature upon Him and came in the likeness of men, came to *save*. ' The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'\*

2. In the prophecy there is a tone of joy. We should judge from the words, that the thing spoken of was a good and happy thing. But this is much more plainly declared in the message : ' Behold !' said the angel, ' I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.' It was no common or indifferent message, but good news ; and such news as should cause ' great joy ;' and that, not only to those few shepherds to whom the angels spoke, but ' to all people.' It was the best and greatest news that ever was brought, the happiest message that ever man or angel had to deliver.

\* Luke, xix. 10.



The most distant nations would have reason to be glad for it, and generations yet unborn would bless the day when that great event took place, of which the angel came to tell.

3. The prophecy, though true and certain, was not clear as to time, and place, and manner. There was enough in it to raise the most eager expectation; and accordingly the pious among the Jews were, like Simeon and Anna, continually 'waiting for the consolation of Israel,'\* that is, looking and longing for the birth of the promised Messiah; the child foretold would surely be born: but when, and where, and how, was not revealed. But in the message of the angel all was made plain; time, and place, and manner, were fully described; and a sign was given by which the shepherds might find the child: 'For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord: and this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' Now that the promised blessing was actually come, there was no longer any doubt or uncertainty. The infant Saviour was clearly pointed out, that

\* Luke, ii. 25-36.

there might be no mistake as to His person ; and now, many prophecies that had been dark before, were made plain by being fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Thus we have compared, in some respects, the prophecy with the message. It was happy to live in the age of prophecy, and see blessings to come, though dim and distant ; but it is happier far, to have our lot cast in Gospel times, when those very blessings are clearly seen and actually enjoyed ; all doubt and darkness gone, and the Saviour ours for ever.

Saviour ! that comforting word, that happy name ; especially when joined to the other title, ' Christ the Lord.' Our Saviour is no other than the CHRIST, the anointed of God, the promised Messiah ; Christ the LORD, and therefore ' mighty to save.' Every word in this title speaks comfort to the humble soul ; showing both the power and willingness of Christ to save : ' a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'

But those other names also are full of comfort ; each has a meaning of its own. I said that many dark prophecies were cleared up, by being fulfilled in the person of Christ. This applies to the names given to Him in the prophecy of Isaiah ; we see their meaning now :

the word 'Saviour' seems to throw light on them all.

He is called there 'Wonderful.' Well may He be called so, considered as our Saviour. The Son of God became man, took on Him the form of a servant, and 'humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'\* He was wonderful before, in His Almighty power and glory; this showed Him to be wonderful in grace and love. 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'† Unasked, unsought, He gave Himself for our transgressions.

He is also called 'Counsellor;' that is, One of great wisdom, an adviser and guide. How often was His infinite wisdom shown when upon earth! Even while yet a child, 'all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.'‡ And afterwards, when the crafty Pharisees sought to 'entangle Him in His talk,' how wisely did He answer them, 'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.' The very same day, the like wisdom was shown in His putting the Sadducees to silence respecting the resurrection from the

\* Phil. ii. 8.    † Rom. v. 8.    ‡ Luke, ii. 47.

dead ; again, in His answer to the lawyer, who asked Him which was the great commandment in the law : and yet again, in His question to the Pharisees respecting the Christ, ‘ If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son ? ’ We are not surprised that the chapter ends thus, ‘ And no man was able to answer Him a word ; neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.’\* But this name ‘ Counsellor ’ implies more than mere wisdom in Him : Christ is the *adviser* and *guide* of His people. He taught His disciples in person when on earth : He now teaches us by His Word and by His Spirit. There is no difficulty, in which we may not find help from Him. In every painful duty, in every doubtful case, in every time of perplexity and fear, the ‘ Counsellor ’ is at hand ; His Word is open to us, His Spirit is promised.

The next title given Him is ‘ The Mighty God.’ How full of comfort is the truth, that our Saviour is God—‘ the Mighty God ! ’ And how great a blessing is it, that this truth is so plainly declared ! We may learn it from many other parts of Scripture, but here it is plainly stated.

\* Matt. xxii. 15-46.

Then He is called 'The Everlasting Father.' He is partaker of the Father's nature, one with the Father ; and He acts a Father's part towards His church. He Himself said, 'If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also : . . . he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father : '\* and again, 'I and my Father are One.'†

And lastly, He is called 'The Prince of Peace.' Here, there is no difficulty. There is not one of the titles which more clearly belongs to Him than this. 'He is our peace : '‡ He made our peace ; the angels sang 'Peace on Earth' when He was born, and His parting gift to His disciples was peace, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.'§ All true peace of mind comes from 'the Prince of Peace.' There is no other real peace. 'Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' This great truth lies at the bottom of all solid peace, 'that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.'|| Further, wherever the reign of 'the Prince of Peace' extends, there war and bloodshed in great

\* John, xiv. 7-9. † Ib. x. 30. ‡ Eph. ii. 14.

§ John, xiv. 27.

|| 2 Cor. v. 19.

measure cease. One of the first changes produced, when a heathen country receives the Gospel, is, that the different tribes are no longer constantly at war among themselves. And in any neighbourhood, parish, or household, in which true religion begins to flourish, there at once peace begins to flourish too; there are fewer bitter feelings and angry words, people learn to be kind and loving. True, our Lord did say that He came not to send peace on earth, but a sword: but why? not because He was not 'the Prince of Peace,' but because all men would not receive Him. He said (and they are sad words), 'From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three: '\* but if all the five were to embrace the Gospel, it would not be so; there would be no division then, and that household would become a little heaven on earth. The day will come, when the 'kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever;''† and reign, as 'The Prince of Peace.' Then there shall be peace indeed; 'they shall not hurt nor destroy

\* Luke, xii. 52.

† Rev. xi. 15.

in all my holy mountain : for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.\*

This is the birthday which we keep to-day, the birthday of our Saviour, the Prince of Peace: there is no other reason why Christmas Day should be kept at all. Let this be borne in mind, or Christmas will not be properly observed. It is quite right to keep it cheerfully; gloom would be out of place on this day. But let the cheerfulness be of the right sort; not idle, senseless, merriment, but sober Christian joy. Let the day be enjoyed; let parents and children meet; let the absent ones come home; let there be a cheerful fireside gathering. But let not Christ be forgotten on His birthday. He will be no spoiler of your joy. There is no Christmas party so happy, as that in which Christ is remembered. Let Him be in your thoughts throughout the day. Think of Him joyfully, gratefully, and lovingly. Do nothing all day on which you cannot ask His blessing. Keep it, in short, as your Saviour's birthday ought to be kept. Happy the household, where Christmas is kept thus! Happy the family,

\* Isa. xi. 9.

that is joined together by the bonds of Christian love; where all love each other, but all love Christ most, and welcome Him as chief guest. They feel no need of worldly excitement; they can be happy without noise, and a crowd, and the glare of lights: enough for them, that, as on this day, He was born whom kings and prophets longed for, 'a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'



## SERMON V.

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### PRAYER AND PROSPERITY :

#### PART I.

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DAN. vi. 28.—‘ So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

THERE is a prosperity which is not to be desired ; that of the wicked ; a short-lived and uncertain prosperity, built on no sure foundation, and bringing no real happiness. David alludes to it when he says, ‘ I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not ; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.’ \* Such was not the prosperity of Daniel. He, like Joseph before him, prospered because ‘ the Lord was with him : ’ † his good fortune, as it would be

\* Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36.

† Gen. xxxix. 23.

called, flowed, directly from the blessing of God. Such prosperity is indeed to be desired.

And why was Daniel blest with this prosperity? How came it, that, under two kings in succession, and doubtless amid many changes, this Daniel prospered still?

It might be answered, because he was a good man, and a wise and faithful servant. He was so indeed; in this very chapter it is said expressly, that he 'was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him :'\* and even his enemies could find no fault in his public doings, 'forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.'† This may account for his favour with two kings; but we must look deeper, to find out how it was that no plot against him succeeded; that he was brought safely through the greatest dangers and difficulties; and that, even when the king was forced to give him up, he was still preserved. The true secret of his prosperity is to be found in that one feature in his character, which is brought forward more prominently than any other—he was a man of *prayer*; and the man of prayer is always blest by God.

\* Dan. vi. 3.

† Ib. vi. 4.

We will therefore take these two points, and consider,

I. Daniel, a man of prayer :

II. Daniel prospering.

I. Daniel was a man of prayer ; and that in several particulars. For,

1. He prayed *often* ; no less than three times a day. And will not all who love prayer, pray often ? A prayer now and then only, will not satisfy one who knows the value and comfort of prayer. Certainly a morning and evening prayer daily, will not be thought too much. Daniel found time for prayer in the middle of the day too. Many would find comfort in a midday prayer ; and not the least, those who, like Daniel, have important concerns to manage. It is a great help and refreshment to retire for a few minutes, when it can be done, from the midst of business and intercourse with others, and hold secret communion with God. Some who have much to do with the world, are thus preserved from a worldly mind. Thus the ruffled spirit is calmed, and difficulties become less, and the Christian is enabled to go about his worldly business in a Christian way.

We are not to suppose that even this praying three times a day, made up the whole of Daniel's prayers. The man of prayer often lifts up his heart to God, when not on his knees before Him. Doubtless many a silent prayer went up from Daniel's heart at other times; for prayer was not with him a mere stated duty, a task to be got through, a form to be observed—but real intercourse with God, the way of obtaining help, strength, comfort, and all else that he wanted.

2. Daniel also prayed *regularly*. Prayer thrice a day was his *habit*, part of the employment of every day.

The soul cannot prosper without habitual private prayer. Nothing can make up for the want of this. Public prayer is good, and family prayer is good; let both be diligently observed; but neither can supply the place of private prayer. Make it a habit, with which nothing must interfere. Even if disinclined for prayer, kneel down at the usual time, and if no other petition come to your mind, ask for help to pray, use the very words of the disciple in the Gospel, 'Lord, teach us to pray!'<sup>\*</sup> You will

<sup>\*</sup> Luke, xi. 1.

often find, that what you thus set about as a duty, becomes a pleasure. Often will you kneel down, feeling dead and cold in heart, as if you desired nothing and felt nothing, and rise up quickened and comforted. And why? Simply because you prayed, though your prayer was feeble; and God for Christ's sake heard and blessed you. I say again then, keep up the *habit*: whether you have prayed or not at other times, when the regular time for prayer comes, go down on your knees.

3. Daniel prayed thus, though a great and busy man. With the chief care of the kingdom upon him, he yet prayed regularly three times a day.

Some men of business excuse themselves from praying, on the ground that they have so much to do. 'When I have less on my hands,' say they, 'I will begin.' But Daniel was more busy than most men. The hundred and twenty princes, who were set over the whole kingdom, gave in their accounts to the three presidents, and of these Daniel was first.\* His time and thoughts must have been fully occupied. He was what we should now call a

\* Dan. vi. 1, 2.

minister of state. If any one could rightly plead business as an excuse for neglecting prayer, Daniel might have done so. But there are none who might not pray if they would. The busiest might find time. It is not time that is wanting, but *will*. Happy is that country, whose statesmen are men of prayer! And happy those merchants and men of business, who make prayer the chief business of every day! They will be no losers, by finding time to pray. God will make them to prosper.

But it is not only the rich who make this excuse,—the statesman, the merchant, the tradesman: I have heard it from poor as well as from rich, and perhaps more often from them than from any. And true it is, the labouring man does ‘rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness.’\* In winter especially, he is off to his work before light, and not at home again till dark; and then he is tired and sleepy. What time has he to pray? Time enough, if he would use it. Here, again, it is not time that is wanting. Let that man once learn the blessing and comfort of prayer, and he will find time to pray. I knew a man once,—a labouring man,

\* Ps. cxxvii. 3.

and clerk of the parish,—who would never go to his work without prayer. Summer or winter, light or dark, he would have his chapter and his prayer, before ever he would leave his house. A good Christian man he was; meek, humble, and consistent; with the good word of all in the parish. As for his wife, she thought there was no one like him, and she was not far wrong. Often used she to tell me, in her own simple way, of her husband's love for his Bible and for prayer. 'If he has to be at his work at six,' she would say, 'he will be at his Bible and his prayers by five: if he is wanted earlier, why then he's up earlier—that's all; but he *must* have his prayer before he goes.' I have often thought of that good man since, as a pattern for rich and for poor.

4. Daniel prayed, even when a great hindrance arose, and his very life was in danger for it. His enemies had got the king to make a law, that if any one should ask a petition for thirty days of any God or man, except of the king himself, he should be cast into the den of lions. This was meant against Daniel, and Daniel knew it. What will he do now? Will he break his habit? Will he go without prayer

for thirty days? No indeed. 'Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.'\* As he did aforetime,—just as he used to do when no danger was near. Here was no temporizing, no giving way 'for once.' The greater the danger, the more need for prayer; the more there were against him, the more necessary to ask God to be on his side. He would not even hide, when he prayed. He was not ashamed or afraid. Three times a day he kneeled down, 'with his window open' as usual, so that all might know.

Alas! the smallest hindrance is enough to keep some from prayer; the mere fear of opposition, or of being laughed at, will lead some to break through their habit 'for once;' it is well, if it be only for once. But it sometimes turns out that, when a young man has once or twice gone to bed without prayer, for fear of what his room-fellow might think, the habit gets weaker and the fear gets stronger, till at length the broken habit comes to be a habit no

\* Dan. vi. 10.



more, and prayer is given up altogether. And even if not, how sad that any should even *once* be kept from prayer by the fear of laughter! Here was a man, who dared to face the wrath of a king, and the deadly malice of his enemies, and the den of lions, rather than not pray. With such an example, will any be kept from prayer by a laugh or a sneer? Perhaps the sneer may not come after all; often respect is felt, where ridicule was expected. And even if it do come, there is nothing to mind in it; the foolish person, and the person really to be ashamed, is not he who prays, but he who laughs. Never be afraid of doing right; never be ashamed of Christ. We read of some who rejoiced, 'that they were counted worthy to suffer shame' for the name of Jesus.\* And we must not forget the solemn words of our Lord, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words . . . of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels.' †

5. Lastly, Daniel was a man of prayer, because he praised as well as prayed. We may be sure this was his constant habit, for even

\* Acts, v. 41.

† Mark, viii. 38.

in that time of danger, we find him giving thanks before his God, as well as praying to Him. It may seem to some to have been a strange time for giving thanks. If he would not be without *prayer* in that time of need and danger, at least he might have put off *praising* till happier days came. Not so felt Daniel. He found much to give thanks for even then. He had praised 'aforetime,' when all seemed to go well with him, tracing every good thing he enjoyed to the hand of God: and now, in the time of adversity, he gave thanks still. Was it not the same gracious God, who was still ordering all his concerns? Could even that rash decree have been made without God's permission? And, dark as the prospect seemed, might it not have been worse? Doubtless, even then, Daniel could see many proofs of God's mercy and favour; and for these he would give thanks.

And so it always is. The man of prayer is a man of praise too. He whose heart is continually lifted up to God, can see mercy, where others can see nothing but misfortune. Thanksgiving forms part of all true prayer, or rather goes with it. God looks for it from us. It is His just due; an honour that He is pleased to

accept from us ; ‘ Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me.’ \* Alas ! how many there are, who do pray in some sort, but seldom or never praise ! But can we expect to receive fresh mercies, when we are blind to those we have received already ? Is prayer from a thankless heart, such prayer as God will hear ? Cultivate a thankful spirit. Join praise to prayer. Think over your blessings. Even in the time of greatest need, mark the tokens of God’s goodness, and give Him thanks. Praise lightens trouble, and relieves anxiety : and, even before the words of petition begin, the words of praise are heard, and are returned in blessing.

In these various points then, was Daniel a man of prayer : he prayed often ; he prayed regularly ; he prayed, though a great and busy man ; he would not let even danger stop him ; and he joined praise to prayer. Let us learn from his example. Are any yet without the habit of prayer ? Are any living in the constant enjoyment of God’s mercies ; fed, clothed, preserved, and blest, from day to day ; dependent on God for everything ; and yet living without either prayer or praise ? Ah ! let not the throne of grace be a thing unknown to you

\* Ps. L. 23.

any longer ! You know not what you lose, while you neglect prayer. The way is open ; we have a Mediator and Intercessor there, Jesus Christ the righteous. Through Him the weakest prayer will be heard, and even the silent, but prayerful, wishes of the heart regarded. Live no longer without prayer,—and thus without God, without Christ. Let each day henceforth find you, like Daniel, on your knees praying and giving thanks.

## SERMON VI.

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### PRAYER AND PROSPERITY:

#### PART II.

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DAN. vi. 28.—‘ So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.’

WE have already considered Daniel as a man of prayer. Now we have to consider him,

#### II. As a prosperous man.

His prosperity, as was before said, was not of that short-lived and uncertain kind, which the wicked are sometimes allowed to enjoy; but a real prosperity, given him by God. He prospered because God blest him. ‘ The Lord was with him; and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.’ \*

\* Gen. xxxix. 23.

But in what did Daniel's prosperity consist? And how did it appear that the Lord was with him?

1. He prospered in the reign of *two* kings: first under Darius, and then under Cyrus. Now, faithful as he was, and well-deserving of favour, yet this alone would lead us to think that his prosperity rested on something better than the favour of man; for it does not often happen in Eastern countries that the favourite minister of one king is favoured by the next also. Yet so it was with Daniel. God gave him favour in the eyes of both these kings.

But is it always so? Do good men always prosper at the courts of kings? Is worldly success invariably theirs? Not so. Sometimes it pleases God to try His servants with affliction. There are ups and downs in almost every life. And it often happens, that if a man will remain faithful to God, he must incur the displeasure of men. Yet, all the while, God is truly blessing and prospering him. For, just as, on the one hand, all outward prosperity is not to be desired, because it does not flow from the favour of God, so, on the other, God's favour and blessing are

often shown in adversity. God has many ways of blessing. Many a trouble is a blessing in disguise. The frowns of men, sickness, poverty, and sorrow, by no means show that God is looking upon us in anger. On the contrary, 'Whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth.'\* If Daniel, under those two kings, had been in disgrace instead of favour, he might yet have been in favour with God all the while. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego found that God's favour and man's favour do not always go together. They must be cast into a burning, fiery furnace, for displeasing the king; but even then the Lord was with them; and never so much before.† Joseph also was a prosperous man, but part of his prosperity was in a prison.

Let faith then lay hold of this,—that the servant of God is really prospering, whatever his outward circumstances may be, for this simple reason, that God's blessing is upon him. This, and this alone, makes real prosperity; and this may be enjoyed, when all outward things seem against us.

## 2. Another remarkable point in the pros-

\* Heb. xii. 6.

† Dan. iii.

perity of Daniel is, that the two kings under whom he prospered were Heathen kings. For though king Darius held the God of Daniel in high respect, and, after the deliverance from the lions' den, even made a decree that all his subjects should tremble and fear before Him as 'the living God and steadfast for ever,'\* yet it does not appear that the king really changed his religion, and forsook his idols, and became a hearty believer in the One true God. It is remarkable therefore, that Daniel was so highly esteemed and trusted by those who did not believe in his religion. The servant of God, prospering at a Heathen Court, is a singular instance of the truth of that verse in the Proverbs, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.'†

The man of prayer lives safe in the midst of danger and difficulty; and a godly life often wins the esteem of those who have no true religion themselves. If Daniel had acted on rules of worldly expediency, and had given up or concealed his principles, in order not to offend the king and his court, he would probably soon have lost the favour of man, as he

\* Dan. vi. 26.

† Prov. xvi. 7.



would certainly have forfeited the blessing of God. A bold, honest, and consistent course, that turns not aside to the right hand or to the left, is the wisest as well as the best. Even opposers respect such a course. And he who is seen to be faithful to his God, is judged likely to be faithful to man also.

Let those who are exposed to temptation, and especially the young, remember the case of Daniel. It is a hard trial for a young man who has been religiously brought up, to live among ungodly or careless companions. Often is he tempted to do as they do, for fear of being thought singular; to give up a point, which he persuades himself is of small importance; at least to conceal his opinions, so that it may not be known that there is any difference between them and him. Let none do so. It is a great mistake. It is not right, and it is not wise. It is going out of the straight course, and turning into a by-path. Be bold and faithful. Be not ashamed of your principles. Even if you must stand alone, be it so. You will not be alone really, because your Father will be with you. Confess Christ before men, and He will not forsake you. Even they who laugh and sneer will feel a secret esteem for you, which they

would never have felt if you had yielded. Your strength lies where Daniel's lay, in secret prayer. Seek help in your closet, before you go forth to the duties and trials of the day. Open all your fears, your weakness, your need, your temptations, to your Father in Heaven; ask for His guidance, grace, and blessing; trust in His word and promise; and then, go forth and fear not. He will enable you to be faithful. He will give you courage, wisdom, and firmness. He will cause even your opposers to respect you, and perhaps make you the happy means of leading them by your example into the right way.

3. Next we see the prosperity of Daniel in this, that, even when brought into great straits, and seemingly given up to the will of his enemies, he was delivered. The king's rash decree was executed. He was cast into the den of lions. But even there God's protecting care did not forsake him. A miracle was wrought to save him; God shut the mouths of the lions. 'So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.'\* Thus

\* Dan. vi. 23.

Daniel's prosperity, like that of Joseph, was shown in various ways ; as much in the den of lions, as in the king's court.

We do not live in an age of miracles. Yet nothing is too hard for the Lord ; and He does still deliver His servants in other ways. 'All things,' we are told, 'work together for good to them that love God.'\* No real evil then can befall such. What seems evil, God will turn into good. And when they are brought into the deepest distress, God can and will work deliverance. This is too much forgotten, even by men of prayer. We are too ready to despond, when things seem against us ; not remembering that those very things are entirely under God's control, without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground. 'Fear ye not therefore,' said our Lord, 'ye are of more value than many sparrows.'† We may be sure that many prayers went up that night from the lions' den. Let our deep distress only make our prayers the more earnest. Never let us think that God has forsaken us. He who shut the lions' mouths will find a way to deliver, even when deliverance seems hopeless.

\* Rom. viii. 28.

† Matt. x. 31.

4. But Daniel's prosperity was not merely outward. God's blessing was shown in more than court-favour, or even deliverance from death. Few, if any, have been more highly blest with *spiritual knowledge* than Daniel. To him it was given to foretell things to come, to speak beforehand of the coming and kingdom of Christ, and to utter prophecies, the full meaning of which is still among those secret things which belong unto the Lord our God. And who can doubt that much of this spiritual light was given in answer to prayer? The promise, 'Ask, and ye shall receive,' applies to every kind of blessing. And none are so likely to have a large measure of light and knowledge as those who are much in prayer.

Let us apply this to ourselves. We do not now look for the spirit of prophecy. Prophecies and miracles alike have been withdrawn. But the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit we do stand in need of continually. To know more of the truth of God, to have a clearer insight into His gracious dealings, to read the Bible with a fuller understanding of its meaning—these are spiritual gifts which God will give in answer to prayer. 'Grow in grace,' says the Apostle Peter, 'and in the

knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'\* But how can we grow, unless it be given us from above? The sure way to spiritual growth is to be much in prayer for the Holy Spirit.

5. Lastly, Daniel had a blessing, an inward prosperity, without which all outward prosperity would have failed to make him happy,—the peace of God. It is not expressly said that he had this blessing, but we read it in his life. How calm he was in danger! How fearless, when death itself seemed to threaten him! The favour of kings did not make him proud, the malice of his enemies could not make him afraid. He was the same man in prosperity and in adversity. The secret of this was—that he had peace within. We trace it in his actions, we hear it in his words. He was more at his ease that night in the den of lions, than the king was on his bed of state. And in the morning it was the king and not Daniel, who showed a mind disturbed. The king, after a sleepless night, rose very early in the morning, and went in haste to the door, and 'cried with a lamentable voice to Daniel, . . . . O Daniel,

\* 2 Pet. iii. 18.

servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?' How calm was the reply that came up from the depths of the den! 'O king, live for ever! My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.'\*

There is a promise (for as a promise it may be taken) which was fulfilled to Daniel, 'The Lord will bless His people with peace.'† That promise will be fulfilled to every man of prayer, to all who seek God in truth. This peace is not that false and hollow peace which the world gives, resting on no sure foundation, and therefore easily disturbed; but the peace of God which passeth all understanding.‡ All the saints of the Old Testament had it, but yet more is said of it in the New Testament than in the Old. In many different places it is called by that name, 'the peace of God.' But the most remarkable mention of it is that by our Lord Himself, when He was just about to leave His disciples: 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I

\* Dan. vi. 20-22. † Ps. xxix. 11. ‡ Phil. iv. 7.

unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’\* Those very words explain what this peace is: it means a heart untroubled, and free from fear; and made so by Christ Himself. Peaceful, not because it is careless and thoughtless, but because it is reconciled to God in Jesus Christ; and because God therefore is now looked to, and trusted in, and loved, as a Father. Do you desire this peace? Would you, like Daniel, be calm in danger, undisturbed by prosperity? Or, in our Lord’s words, would you have a heart untroubled, and not afraid? Seek it by prayer. There is nothing like prayer for bringing peace. The man of prayer generally has peace; and even when trouble comes to such a man, and doubts and fears begin to rise, prayer will bring comfort and peace again. Of all parts of prosperity, desire this most: to be pardoned and reconciled through the blood of Christ, and then to live in the constant enjoyment of ‘the peace of God.’

Thus we have seen Daniel, as a man of prayer, and as a prosperous man, and both in several respects; and I have tried to show a connexion between the two,—that he prospered

\* John, xiv. 27.

because he prayed. 'Go thou and do likewise.' The God of Daniel is clearly revealed to us in Christ Jesus: seek Him for your God. You cannot prosper in sin, or without Christ: but in Him, blessings without number are to be had by those who are instant in prayer; pardon for the past, grace for the future, strength for all coming temptation. Nay, the Apostle sums up the believer's prosperity in these remarkable words, 'All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all things are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.'\* Yes! all things are yours,—and all 'without money and without price;† all to be had for the asking; all given freely in answer to prayer. 'Pray without ceasing!‡

\* 1 Cor. iii. 21-23. † Isa. lv. 1. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 17.



## SERMON VII.

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### JESUS DOING ALL THINGS WELL.

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MARK, vii. 37.—‘And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.’

WELL might they be astonished. Here was a poor afflicted creature, a man both deaf and partly dumb, brought to Jesus and cured in a moment. A touch, a sigh, an upward look, a single word,—‘and straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.’ All who saw it wondered and admired. ‘He hath done all things well,’ they said. Well, because *completely*: this was no mere amendment, no half cure; the man could now speak and hear like other men. And well also, because it was so *merciful* a work: not a mere wonder, but a work of love, giving

comfort and happiness to a sufferer. Jesus told them to tell no man of it; but they were so struck with amazement, that they could not keep what they had seen to themselves, 'but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it,' speaking of it wherever they went, and spreading the good news far and wide.

Whether these people meant this miracle only, when they said, 'He hath done all things well,' or whether they knew of others of the same sort, we cannot tell. But certain it is, that these words of theirs do exactly describe the whole course of our Saviour, 'He hath done all things well.' His life was spent in such works as these. He went about doing good. Probably not a day passed, in which He did not restore some to peace and comfort. We are not to think that *all* His works are mentioned in the Gospels. St. John himself says, 'And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.'\* This work therefore of curing the deaf and dumb, and all other works of mercy that are

\* John, xxi. 25.

recorded, are but samples of the whole, a few cases out of many, regarding all of which it might be said, 'He hath done all things well.'

I mentioned just now two senses of this word 'well.' Let us look at them again, as applicable to His works in general. 'He hath done all things well,' that is, both *perfectly* and *kindly*.

1. Jesus did all His works *perfectly*. He never tried to do a thing and failed. Men, even the wisest and ablest, often fail. For instance, in sickness, how often is the best advice had, and all to no purpose. Fresh doctors are sent for, new medicines tried, neither pains nor money spared; and still no cure; at best perhaps a little relief from pain, or a short lengthening out of the sick man's days. I am not undervaluing human skill and means. Often they do much good. But certainly they often fail. Not only sick people, but sufferers of the same sort as the man in the text, are witnesses of that. How many deaf people are deaf still, though all has been done for them that could be done. How many blind are still without sight, though no possible means have been left

\* Mark, v. 25-29.

untried ! The deaf, the blind, the lame, still found among us, are so many living proofs, of the vast difference between the Divine power of Christ, and that limited power which is bestowed upon man. The woman with an issue of blood, 'had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse ;' yet no sooner did she, in faith, touch the garment of Jesus, than she was healed of her plague.\* All that He did, He did perfectly. Where man failed, Jesus succeeded. Where human help could do nothing, it wanted but a touch or a word from Him, and all was done, — there was a perfect cure, a full relief.

2. But all His works were done *kindly* also, and therefore well. Men sometimes delight to do great actions, in order to be praised or admired. Nay, some, to win a name, will even take pains to do evil. But all the works of Jesus were works of love. All His wonders were to do good. This cannot be better expressed than in the very words of the text, 'He hath done all things well ; He maketh

\* Mark, v. 25-29.

both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.' Wherever He went, men were the better for His coming. Numbers were made happy by Him. Not only the sufferers themselves, but their friends too. Probably there was not one of His gracious works that did not bring gladness to more hearts than one. Fathers, sisters, masters, friends, were made happy by what He did to those dear to them. The more we read and think of His works on earth, the more heartily shall we say with them of old, 'He hath done all things *well*.'

But they who said so, did not know all He was to do. They saw Him cure the deaf; and they knew perhaps that His whole life was spent in such works: but there was one thing He was to do at last, better than all, more wonderful and more kind; He was to *die*. He did all things well; but would you see Him doing His best, His greatest, His kindest work? See Him on the Cross! Look at His hands and His feet pierced with the nails; see the marks of suffering in His face; hear what He says! Why does the Son of God hang there? Why does He let cruel men treat Him so? It is for *us*. There He is doing all well indeed,—a work of love, a complete

and perfect work. He is undoing the evil that Satan did, paying man's debt, saving sinners, reconciling transgressors to God, and making thousands happy for ever. If they who saw the deaf man cured, could have seen and understood *this*, they would have wondered and admired yet more than they did.

I called that His *last* work. But it was so in one sense only. For—not to speak of His great work of rising from the dead, and then ascending into heaven,—He still works, and still does all things well; both kindly and completely. He is our Saviour still, our Mediator and Intercessor, our Friend and Helper, carrying on still a gracious work on our behalf; and the very words of the text about the deaf and the dumb may still be applied to what He does for us.

Is there a minister faithfully and powerfully preaching the Gospel? It is the Lord Jesus who, by His Spirit, opens his mouth and gives him power. His gifts and graces all come from above. But for this, he would be to all intents and purposes *dumb*, unable to say anything that should touch the conscience or reach the heart. First, his own heart has been wrought upon by divine grace, and now that

same grace opens his mouth to preach to others.

Is there one,—whether minister or private Christian,—who goes about doing good to souls, comforting those in sorrow, cheering the depressed, exhorting wanderers, reconciling foes; speaking words of Christian kindness, sympathy, and love, at home and abroad? That happy art was learnt from above. He who made the dumb to speak plainly, taught that Christian also to speak persuasive words. The fervent spirit, and the earnest and loving speech, are both His gift.

Again,—is there a man, who long turned a deaf ear to the voice of God, but has now heard and obeyed,—has had his mind awakened to the great concern, and begun to seek salvation? This too is the work of Him who ‘maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.’ The Holy Spirit, promised by our Lord when He went away, has wrought this change. No other power could have made that deaf one to hear, and softened that hard heart, and brought that careless one to think and pray. This is *His* doing, who doeth all things well.

Day by day the gracious Saviour does His

works of mercy. Not now in person or by miracles, yet as constantly and as lovingly as when He went about on earth doing good. In body and in soul, we are still His care. True, we do not see such sights as made the people in the text 'beyond measure astonished,'—the deaf and the dumb cured by a word or a touch. Yet even now the same healing power is not withheld. Else, why pray to God, when those we love are sick? Often, when the doctor's skill is praised, or a sound constitution gets the credit of a recovery, it is forgotten that these are but means and instruments; and that it is the great First Cause Himself, who has really healed the sick. And so, when by means of preachers or friends, gifted with those persuasive words I spoke of, any heart has been changed, or soothed, or cheered, the work is not theirs, but God's; they are but instruments in His hand, the power is His alone. Often indeed, as if to show that He needs them not, He works without human instruments at all. When the heart feels softened and humbled, we know not how; when serious thoughts and the spirit of prayer arise, we cannot tell whence; when some word of Scripture speaks with power to the heart,



though often lightly passed over before; this is the work of the Spirit of Christ, doing all things well.

There are other dealings of His, which *faith* sees to be good, though they do not seem so to the eye of sense. I mean the afflictions which He sends. If you have had trouble, if those dear to you have been taken away, if losses and disappointments have fallen to your lot,—remember, these things did not come by chance; they came from God; they formed part of His doings, who doeth all things *well*. Yes, *all* things well; the afflicting as well as the blessing, the taking away as well as the giving. Even now, can you see no good that has come by sorrow,—inward good, by outward or seeming evil? Is it not well, if you love the world less and Christ more, if your will is more conformed to the will of God, if the work of sanctification has been advanced in you? Is it not *good* for you that you have been afflicted? Perhaps, through grace, you see this in a measure already. You will see it more clearly hereafter. At least, believe that ‘God is love;’ that Jesus doeth *all* things well, kindly, as well as wisely and completely; and pray, not so much that you

may be without affliction, as that sorrow and suffering may be more and more sanctified to your soul, and draw you closer to God in Christ.

One word more. Those men in the text for aught we know, were mere lookers-on. They wondered, and talked, and that was all : we do not read that they became disciples. They saw others getting good from Jesus, but we do not find them coming to seek good for themselves. It must not be so with us. We must be more than bystanders, looking on and wondering. For *we* are the very persons in need ; we ourselves are the blind, and deaf, and sick, and lame, in need of the healing power of Christ : our *souls* require Him. Oh, let us see our need, and come to Him, and cleave to Him ! He will do all things well for us. Unworthy as we are, yet for the sake of that great work of His in dying for us, and because He still lives to plead for us, we shall be accepted and welcomed. Our sins will all be forgiven for His sake ; we shall be saved to the uttermost. All things throughout our earthly course shall be ordered for us wisely and well. And at length we shall be taken *home*, to be where He is for ever. Then we shall see face to

face, and know even as also we are known ; \* then things that now seem dark will be cleared up ; then unbelief and despondency will have no place in us any more. We shall look back, and wonder, and admire. Not so much at any works of mercy performed on others, as at the gracious dealings we ourselves have experienced. The sharpest stroke will then be seen to have been dealt by the hand of love ; the most painful bereavement will appear in its true light as an unspeakable blessing ; wisdom, power, and love, will shine forth in all the way by which we have been led ; and we shall acknowledge with adoring gratitude, that ' He hath done all things well.'

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

## SERMON VIII.

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### GOD'S DEALINGS IN THE WILDERNESS.

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DEUT. viii. 2.—‘And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no.’

THESE words, like many other parts of this solemn exhortation of Moses, though addressed to all the Israelites, are put into the form which we commonly use in speaking to one person, ‘And *thou* shalt remember.’ Perhaps this was done purposely, in order that each person might apply the words to himself, and lay to heart more practically and personally the past dealings of God. It is in this way

that this exhortation may be useful to *us* also. Let each hearer or reader consider himself addressed personally.

The words, as they stand, will furnish us with several points for consideration.

1. 'Thou shalt remember.' In these opening words a general duty is taught ; the duty of thoughtful remembrance of the past. We are not to lead forgetful lives, treating the past as no longer of any importance, and not troubling ourselves to think of it any more. Many do so. If thoughts of the past cost them uneasiness or self-reproach, they will do all they can to drive them away : they will do anything rather than *think*. This is quite opposed to the text. We *ought* to think ; we ought to remember. And the man who will not even give them a thought will lose all the benefit of God's past dealings.

2. For these are the things which the text bids us remember. The words are, 'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness.' Now, the forty years of the Israelites in the wilderness represent to us the whole course of

our life. Theirs was a life of constant change ; they went through many difficulties and troubles ; often they were weary and disheartened. Yet they had many mercies, helps, and comforts. They were always under God's guidance and protection ; when they were in want of water, a miracle supplied them ; and every day God fed them with manna. And such is life with us all, more or less : a life of change, and trouble, and difficulty ; yet a life full of blessings. We, like the Israelites, are passing through the wilderness. We have all had our troubles, and can all speak of our mercies too. At times perhaps, we have been brought into great straits ; but God has helped us through ; not by a miracle, but in the common course of His providence. These things are to be remembered. *All* the way by which we have been led ; the rough places, and the smooth ; the quiet times, and the seasons of trouble ; the blessings, the losses, the comforts, the chastisements ; God's dealings with us, and our behaviour under them ; all are to be thought over and borne in mind ; 'Thou shalt remember all the way.'

Some have a long course to look back upon ; much more than forty years ; and every year

full of things to think of. Their youthful days are long past and gone, even their middle life seems far off, they are now old and grey-headed, and perhaps memory in general has begun to fail. Yet there are things in their past life, which even now seem as fresh as ever ; things that happened years ago, and yet seem as if they were but of yesterday. Some childish joy or grief, some deep sorrow of riper years, some sudden stroke, some striking deliverance, some happy time when all seemed smooth and peaceful, a week of mourning between a death and a burial ; such things as these live long in the memory. The waves of time roll over them, but still they remain. Other things, that have happened since, are forgotten, but not these. They are not forgotten, and they are not *meant* to be. They ought to be remembered and thought of. There is not one of them from which some useful lesson may not be learnt. The text applies to all persons, but most to the aged. They have so much to remember, and so little time left. God's dealings with them have been so many and so long. They, of all people, should remember the way by which they have been led. It is sad to see a thoughtless old

man; one of whom it might be said, 'Grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.'\* Old as he is, he has not yet begun to consider his latter end; with a long life to look back upon, and eternity near at hand, he still cares only to amuse himself day by day as best he may. How solemnly the text speaks to such, 'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee!'

3. These words bring us to another point: it is God who has led us. Every journey the Israelites took, the way by which they went, the places at which they rested, every danger and trouble, every help and deliverance, were ordered by God; HE was leading them. It is just so with *us*. Our lot in life, whatever it is, was fixed by Him. Every circumstance, every change, has been of His appointment. We may have gone through many troubles, and seen many changes; but, in them all, the hand of God has been leading us, as much as He led Israel through the wilderness.

It is a great comfort to those who love God, to think this; to look back on even the most

\* Hos. vii. 9.



painful part of their life, and consider that it was God who led them that way. He might as easily have led them by a smoother path, had He seen fit; He might have so ordered events, as to save them from this heavy loss, or spare them that cutting sorrow. But, in His wisdom and love, He would not do so. He led them by the *right* way, though that way was rough in parts. The thought of this reconciles them to all the past, they would not have it otherwise. Enough for them, that their God and Father led them by the way He saw best.

4. The Israelites were told to remember not only the way, and who had led them, but also *why* He had led them thus. We too ought to bear this in mind. God has an object in all He does. He never lets things happen to us by chance, or without a reason and purpose. We may not be able to see it, but He always has one.

God's object in leading the Israelites as He did was this: 'to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no.' Doubtless God is continually dealing with *us*

with the same object, to *humble*, and to *prove* or try, us.

We all want humbling. There is by nature a root of pride in every one of us. Pride takes different shapes in different people ; and in some it is greater, in others less ; but all have it, in some shape and measure. Naturally we are proud, vain, and self-confident. Now, we *must* be humbled, if ever we would be happy ; and a great part of God's dealings with us is meant to bring down our pride, and make us feel our dependence on Him. And so He sends us losses and sorrows, often brings our plans to nothing, and in various ways makes us find out our weakness, and ignorance, and sinfulness—that we may learn to take a lowly view of ourselves, and to trust in Him in all things. This is a peculiarly hard lesson with some ; for some are naturally prouder and more self-confident than others. I remember an aged clergyman, who had passed a life more full of trouble than most, saying to me with tears, when speaking of his sore trials, 'It wanted them *all*, to break down the desperate pride of my heart.' It had been a painful work ; but even then, though at that very time suffering under a heavy affliction in his family, he could

see that all had been for good : he had wanted humbling, and humbled he had been.

God's object is also to prove, or try, us. We are apt to call our afflictions *trials*, without bearing in mind what the word trial means. Afflictions, as sent by God, are not mere afflictions, that is, things meant to afflict us, with no further object. They are, strictly speaking, *trials* ; things sent on purpose to try us ; to try how we will bear affliction, and whether we will cleave to God when things seem against us, as well as when they seem in our favour. Thus it was that Job was tried. In prosperity he had served God truly ; it pleased God to give him over in part into the hands of Satan, that it might be seen whether he would serve God in adversity too. Oh, how often does a change of circumstances show us even to ourselves in a new light ! Till affliction came, or till we were vexed, provoked, or spoken against, we should not ourselves have known how we should feel and behave. But such things as these are *trials* ; they are sent or allowed by God for that very purpose : it is thus that we gain a knowledge of our own hearts, and we are both tried and humbled by the very same means.

‘To know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no.’ This was the particular object for which the Israelites were tried ; and the same applies to us. God’s dealings try our *hearts*, the secret springs and motives of what we do. We may keep right with man, and even bear a religious character, while the heart is not right with God, and our principles and motives are even hateful in His sight. His trial of us therefore goes far deeper than our outward life : it pierces into our secret thoughts, brings out our motives, shows us our hidden feelings, and proves ‘what is in our *hearts*.’

‘Whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no.’ These words show us what God looks for from us ; obedience, fruit, service ; an eye to His will in all things ; an earnest desire and endeavour to keep His commandments. Does any one say, this is the Law, and not the Gospel ? Not so. This is Law and Gospel too. If any man make not the holy law of God his rule, be sure that man has never really embraced the Gospel. Wherever there is the root of faith, there will surely be found the fruits of holiness. Let no man build on his own works, in whole or in

part; but simply on the merits of the Lord Jesus. But let a man equally beware of resting in the *name* of faith. A barren faith is no faith: it is but a crying of 'Lord, Lord!' a building on the sand, a house without a foundation.\* The Old Testament, and the New, here speak the same thing. In the Old, we find God trying man, to see whether he would keep His commandments, or no; in the New, we hear of the owner of the vineyard coming to seek fruit on his fig-tree, and preparing to cut it down when he found none.† There is something wrong in that religion, which does not lead us every day to strive, above everything, to keep God's commandments. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.' ‡

Thus has God been dealing with us all our life long; in various ways, but with the same, or the like, object; to humble us and to prove us. And thus should we bethink ourselves and remember.

And has He found all right with us,—our hearts right, our obedience complete? Has there been no fault or shortcoming discovered by this trial? Alas! who can say this?

\* Luke, vi. 46-49.

† Ib. xiii. 7.

‡ Matt. v. 6.

Whose memory is so short, but that he can call to mind many things done which he ought not to have done, and many left undone which he ought to have done? Surely we must all come to this conclusion, 'There is no health in us.'

What then? There is yet hope. God's purpose is explained in the text; but it is more fully explained in the 16th verse of this chapter; where the words are, 'that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, *to do thee good at thy latter end.*' Yes! all God's dealings with us are to do us good in the end, if we will rightly use them. Job's latter end was more blessed than his beginning.\* David said, 'It is *good* for me that I have been afflicted.'† And many of God's servants have had reason to bless God for trials, and will have reason through all eternity. And why? Because, by means of trials, they were brought to Christ. Many a heart that was careless and worldly throughout years of unbroken prosperity, has been brought to Christ by means of trouble; and thus God has done good to such in their latter end. Even the Law itself is 'our schoolmaster to

\* Job, xlii. 12.

† Ps. cxix. 71.

bring us to Christ;’ \* and God’s dealings with us in general have this gracious object, to lead us to One who is mighty to save.

There is no shortcoming there. We ‘are complete in Him.’ † By a true faith in Christ Jesus we are pardoned, justified, and accepted; all past sins are blotted out, and grace is assured to us for the future. Yet more than this,—if it be in our heart, through grace, to trust and love and obey, then even our imperfect obedience is accepted in Christ; and when the all-searching eye is upon us, scanning our heart and life, though all that is found there is defiled with sin, yet the imperfect obedience, the feeble service, the faint spark of love, and even the desire of the heart, are not rejected or despised. Sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, they are graciously regarded; and we, and our poor services, are ‘accepted in the Beloved.’ ‡

\* Gal. iii. 24.      † Col. ii. 10.      ‡ Eph. i. 6.

## SERMON IX.

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### FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

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JOHN, xix. 37.—‘ And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.’

MANY prophecies were fulfilled at the death of Christ; among them, the prophecy quoted in the text. There is a prophecy somewhat like it in the 22nd Psalm, ‘They pierced my hands and my feet.’ But the prophecy in the text is taken from the prophet Zechariah: the whole passage is as follows: ‘And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.’ \*

\* Zech. xii. 10.



There are two points in the text.

1. The piercing.
2. The looking.

1. The piercing—‘ They shall look on Him whom they *pierced*.’

Who pierced our Lord ? It was a Roman soldier, who actually gave the wound ; but does the text refer to Roman soldiers ? No : the passage from Zechariah shows us plainly who are meant ; not Romans, but Jews ; ‘ the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem ;’ in other words, the Jewish nation. For though it was a Roman who dealt the blow, yet the Jews were the cause of it. Roman hands did it, but Jewish hearts and voices were in it ; those hearts so full of malice and hatred, those voices that cried, ‘ Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him.’ \* These were the men who really pierced Him, though they neither held the spear, nor drove a nail.

This leads us a step further. There is yet another way of piercing Christ, in which more than the Jews are concerned. Let us turn to

\* John, xix. 15.

the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, and the 5th verse. There we read, 'He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities.' Now, if He was wounded for our transgressions, then they were our transgressions that pierced Him. And this word '*our*' refers to more than Jews only; it takes in *all* for whom Christ died, whether Jews or Gentiles; these transgressions are the sins of *all*.

When therefore we think of our Saviour's sufferings and death; when we see Him on the cross,—His hands and feet pierced with nails, His side wounded by the spear,—such thoughts as these should come to our minds, '*I* had a hand in that work; *my* sins in part brought Him there; I am one of those who pierced Him!' Yes, it is so indeed. If Christ died for all, then all are concerned in piercing Him. Every sinner bore his part in that work. It was not the nails or the spear that wounded Him most, but our sins. 'He was wounded for our transgressions.'

Are there none, who are thus piercing Him still? St. Paul says of those who fall away from God, that 'they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.'\*

\* Heb. vi. 6.

may be said, in a measure, to do the same. Not that our Lord can suffer now. All His sufferings were over when 'He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost,'\* neither mind nor body could ever feel another pang; it was *finished*. But wilful sinners crucify Him afresh, by putting Him to an open shame; they bring dishonour upon Him. Just as the hardened priests and scribes and elders said, as they watched Him hanging on the cross, 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save,'† so do they who sin wilfully, though knowing that He died for sinners, do what in them lies to bring discredit on His work. They do, as it were, mock Him by their sins. The Jews said He could not save Himself; these declare by their sins that He does not save *them*. As far as they are concerned, they make the cross of Christ 'of none effect.'‡ It is sad, that even Romans and Jews, in their blinded ignorance and hardness, should pierce the blessed Son of God: but how much more sad is it, that they who are called by His name, and profess to belong to Him, should crucify Him afresh by their sins!

\* John, xix. 30.

† Matt. xxvii. 42.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 17.

2. The text speaks of a looking, as well as of a piercing, 'They shall *look* on Him whom they pierced.'

There were many lookers-on when He was pierced. People of various kinds; many who hated, and some who loved Him; Roman soldiers, Jewish priests and people, the disciples, the faithful women who had followed Him from Galilee, and His own mother.

But these are not the persons meant: at least, this is not the looking here spoken of. The piercing and the looking do not take place together; 'they *shall* look on Him whom they pierced.'

It may be that the prophecy of Zechariah refers to the second coming of Christ, described in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, 'Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him.' The prophet may have meant to describe the feelings with which the penitent among the Jews will regard Him, when He shall appear again in person. But certainly we may also take him to mean—the looking of the *mind* to Christ, the turning of the contrite heart to Him, before His personal appearance. And, in this sense, we may apply the words to *all*

penitent sinners, and not to Jews only. All, in every age, who are brought to know and feel that they have pierced Jesus by their sins, will turn their thoughts to Him in sorrow and humiliation. The feelings with which they will look are strikingly expressed in the prophecy, 'They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.'

The sorrow here described is of no common kind; it is likened to the tender grief of a parent, mourning for his first-born or only child. Now, in that mourning, there is love as well as grief. Were it a stranger that was gone, the parent's feelings would be far different. It is love, that makes his sorrow so deep. So, when the contrite heart looks to Christ on the cross, there is love as well as grief in the look. Deep sorrow is felt for His sufferings, and for the sins that caused them; but, mixed with that sorrow, is love to Him who willingly endured all for the sake of sinners, and that peculiar tenderness which we feel when those whom we *love* suffer.

Such appears to be the meaning, or one

meaning at least, of the prophet's words, as quoted in the text, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced.' Every person, when brought to a true sense of sin, shall look with love and sorrow on that blessed Saviour, who was 'wounded for our transgressions.'

No words could better describe what should be our feelings on Good Friday. On this day, above all others, our thoughts are directed to our crucified Saviour. All hearts are turned towards Him; we look on Him in His sufferings and death; every particular is brought before us in the services of the day; again the sad story is read in our ears; our dying Lord is the subject of the day. With what mind should we thus look on Him? How should we think and feel on this day? Surely, sorrow and love should be in our hearts; deep, tender, self-abasing sorrow: yet not a gloomy, hopeless grief, like the sorrow of the world, for our redemption is linked with His sufferings, our life with His death. We mourn for the stripes He bore, we are cut to the heart to think that it was for our sins He bore them; but we love Him, because He so loved us; we love Him, because He thus gave His back to the smiter, and poured out His soul unto death; and even

on this day of sorrow, comfort and hope spring up in our hearts, from the thought that 'by His stripes we are *healed*.' If *He* was 'wounded for our transgressions,' then *we* may go free; if 'the chastisement of our peace was upon *Him*,' \* then the punishment is taken off from us for ever. Divine justice will exact no second penalty. The great sacrifice has been made and accepted. And now the happy news to every sinner is, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' †

Alas! how many who bear the name of Christian have no feeling of sorrow, of love, or of hope, even on this solemn day! Christ is nothing to them. His sufferings, His death, His love, raise no feeling in their hearts. They may not be hard-hearted on other subjects. Tidings of injustice and oppression will make them indignant, they will feel natural pity for the sufferings of a fellow-creature, and a tale of sorrow may even draw tears from their eyes; but for the blessed Son of God, dying on the cross for sinners—for *them*, if they would believe it—they have no pity, no sorrow, no love. What wonder then, that Good Friday is to such a mere holiday, an idle day, a day of

\* Isa. liii. 5.

† Acts, xvi. 31.

pleasure? Pleasure! alas, it was no pleasure-day to HIM. Oh, on this day, when steamboats are crowded, and trains are full, and numbers go from morning till night without one thought of Christ, or one look towards Him whom they have pierced, with what solemn force do those words of expostulation seem to apply, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger.' \*

Whence comes this unconcern? And what is it which such persons need to make them care for their sins and their Saviour? The very thing mentioned in the prophecy of Zechariah, 'the spirit of grace and of supplications.' Not till this spirit should be poured upon them would the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem look upon Him whom they had pierced, and mourn; and, in like manner, every sinner is careless and impenitent, till softened and subdued by the grace of God. None, by nature, mourn for sin, or love the Lord Jesus Christ. There must be a change wrought in the heart by grace: the sense of

\* Lament. i. 12.



sin must be given from above ; and the sinner must learn, by the Spirit's teaching, to pray in truth, and to look in faith to Christ.

Do any, to whom these words come, feel cold in heart this day, though really desiring to have Christ in their thoughts? Let them earnestly ask for 'the Spirit of grace and of supplications.' That is a prayer which will never be made in vain. The promise will be fulfilled to them. The Spirit will be poured out from on high. New light, and life, and warmth, will be given. And this solemn day will become to them a day of earnest prayer, of deep humiliation, of lively faith and love. Thus it will be 'Good Friday' indeed ; a day of blessing, although a day of sorrow.

## SERMON X.

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### FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

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1 PET. ii. 21-24.—‘ For even [hereunto were ye called : because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth : who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously : who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed. ’

Two things are here taught us about our Lord Jesus Christ in His sufferings and death :

1. That He is our Saviour ; and
2. That He is our example.

Both are points of the greatest importance, both main truths in religion ; and both are very

plain and simple: it wants no learning to understand them. But it is one thing to understand, and another to feel. May God the Holy Spirit give us the feeling heart, as well as the hearing ear and the understanding mind!

1. Jesus Christ is our *Saviour*. He suffered for us; He bare our sins in His own body on the tree; by His stripes we were healed.

This is the first great truth of Christ's religion. All the rest hangs upon this. If this doctrine could by any means be taken away, the whole would fall. St. Paul said to the Corinthians, 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'\* And in the chapter before he goes even further, when he says, 'For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.'† Not that he would confine himself to that one doctrine (he wrote on many others, and doubtless spoke also), but he was determined that all his teaching should agree with this great truth, and be based upon it. Every doctrine should have a savour, or taste, of Christ crucified. Again and again he would

\* 1 Cor. iii. 11.

† 1 Cor. ii. 2.

come round to the point he started from. Whatever subject he touched on, he would not wander from 'Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.'

Be clear on this point. It is so simple, that a child may understand it; yet not the wisest and greatest can be saved in any other way. Never think to save yourselves. It cannot be. You might try all your life long: and where would you be at the end? After all your working and striving, your painful self-denial, your carefulness and strictness, where would you be at the end, if you had had no eye to Christ? Just where you were when you began; not a step nearer than when you set out. For Christ said, '*I am the way*;'\* and that is *not* the way you would have walked in. No! you cannot save yourselves. You must owe it all to another. Salvation is not of works, but of grace.

Let us look at this truth a little more closely.

We were 'as sheep going astray,' transgressors against God, by nature and by practice. Man had sinned; and, far from being able to pay off any part of the old debt, did but add to it continually. A sinful nature was ever leading him into fresh sin. Thus there was no

\* John, xiv. 6.

help, no hope. The debt grew, the guilt increased, every day made his case worse.

God saw us in this hopeless state, and gave His only-begotten Son to be a sacrifice for our sins. The Lord Jesus Christ took our nature upon Him, and died for us. He who was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;'<sup>\*</sup> 'who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth;' yet put Himself in our place, bore our sins, stood between us and wrath. There was nothing else between us and it; we had deserved it: but He bore it for us, and died, the just for the unjust. In the garden of Gethsemane, in the hall of judgment, and upon the cross—this was the work He was doing, this the burden He was bearing. 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on HIM the iniquity of us all.'<sup>†</sup> The sacrifice was accepted. That precious blood made a full atonement for sin. For all who should believe, the debt was paid fully and for ever.

Here is the poor man's comfort, the rich man's only hope; in life and in death, the only ground of peace. Receive this great

<sup>\*</sup> Heb. vii. 26.

<sup>†</sup> Isa. liii. 6.

truth. Receive it simply and fully. Let there be no mixing of man's works with Christ's atonement, or all will be spoilt; but let there be a simple faith in Christ crucified. Then the fruit of good works will surely follow: not mixed up in the thoughts with faith, as if the two together were to save; but following upon, and springing from, faith, as fruit from a tree.

It is this doctrine that makes Good Friday a good, and even a happy, day. For those who are careless about salvation, or look to be saved by works, there is no comfort in this day. But the humble believer sees his Saviour dying on the cross, and in that sight finds peace. He mourns indeed for his Saviour's sufferings, and for his own sins,—and never does sin seem so hateful to him, as when he views Jesus on the cross,—but faith reminds him, 'by His stripes ye were healed;' and hope and peace follow.

2. Jesus Christ, in His sufferings and death, is our example, as well as our Saviour.

This is brought before us in the text, even more strongly than the first point. 'For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also

suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.'

Now, Christ is our pattern in *all* things; but here we are taught to follow Him in one particular respect, that is, in bearing ill-treatment meekly. Let us go back to the 19th and 20th verses. 'This is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.' This, the apostle shows us, is our duty: and then he goes on, in the text, to set Christ before us as our example for so doing. Our blessed Lord did exactly as those verses say we should do. He endured grief, suffering wrongfully: He did well and suffered for it, yet He took it patiently. When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not. He had done no sin, yet He let Himself be put to a shameful death; He had gone about doing good, yet He patiently submitted to ill-treatment of every kind. No angry word escaped His lips; sorrow there was, but not anger; suffering, but not im-

patience. 'He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.' \*

Christians! see here your pattern. Look at His goodness, His patience, His meekness: see Him in the judgment-hall; hear His words, even from the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do:' † and then think of the apostle's words—'leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.'

Is this indeed the example you follow? Is this how you meet unkindness and wrong? Is this the way in which you feel and speak and act, when others are unjust and cruel? I do not ask, what you do to those you love, or how you repay those who have been kind to you; nor do I ask how you bear a punishment which you have deserved: but I ask this—when you do well, and suffer for it, do you take it patiently? When you are reviled, do you check yourself from reviling again? When you suffer unjustly, do you abstain from angry and threatening words?

Jesus expects it of you; your Saviour looks

\* Isa. liii. 7.

† Luke, xxiii. 34.



for this return ; ‘ even hereunto were ye called.’ For His sake to check the rising anger, to stop the hasty word, to bear wrong meekly, to be kind to the unkind, and just (and more than just) to the unjust, to return good for their evil—this is the service of love your Saviour looks for from you. His teaching and His example exactly agree. Hear His own words, ‘ Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you : that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.’ \*

This is not easy. Far from it. When wrong is done to us, and we know we have not deserved it ; when we are cut to the quick by unkindness and injustice, and every feeling within us seems to rise against such treatment ; then, to be meek and patient and forgiving, is a hard task indeed. Yet *love*, love to Christ, will make it easier : it *may* be done, in His

\* Matt. v. 43-45.

strength. Do you *try*? Is it your *wish*? Then He will surely help you. His grace is sufficient for you. Prayer will bring strength in the hour of need; and He, your Saviour, who set you this task, and required of you this proof of love, will enable you by His Spirit to do it.

Your strength lies in prayer. But it will help you also, to think often of Christ the Saviour. Nothing so softens our feelings towards others, and disposes us to meekness, forgiveness, and love, as to bear in our hearts the Lord Jesus dying for us. Christ known and loved as a Saviour, will make Christ followed as an example. Does anger rise? Remember, 'He was wounded for our transgressions.' Is your love ready to fail under unkindness? Think how *He* loved *you*; and what He bore, and how He bore it, and for whom. 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.'\*

But do any not even try or wish to be like Jesus in this? To such, this is a solemn text. You cannot separate what God has joined. Christ is both Saviour and example. You

\* Eph. iv. 32.

cannot have Him as your Saviour, and yet reject Him as your pattern. If you receive Him at all, you must receive Him altogether. How plain and strong are those words, 'If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.'\* He may know much, and talk much,—but if his heart be not set to follow Christ, he has no part nor lot in the matter. The tree is known by its fruit. Real faith is never barren. A saving interest in Christ's atonement will always make a man *aim* at least to be like Him: and, among other things, he will strive to copy 'the meekness and gentleness of Christ.'† Oh that all who bear the name of Christ, might live in the spirit of that collect of our Church, 'Almighty God, who hast given Thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.'‡

\* Rom. viii. 9.

† 2 Cor. x. 1.

‡ Collect for the Second Sunday after Easter.

## SERMON XI.

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### FOR EASTER.

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1 Cor. xv. 20.—‘ Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.’

SOME things in religion are matters of faith, and some are matters of fact ; some we believe because they are written in the Word of God, and some because they are proved by evidence. We have in this verse a truth of each sort. It is a matter of *fact*, that ‘ Christ is risen from the dead : ’ it is a matter of *faith*, that He is ‘ become the first-fruits of them that slept.’ Let us consider these two points in their order.

I. ‘ Now is Christ risen from the dead.’ This is a matter of fact. It has pleased God to make

this truth rest on proofs so plain and strong, that all must believe it, who are not determined beforehand not to believe. It has been often said, and said truly, that if a man does not believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, there is no reason why he should believe any fact in history; for no fact can be told more plainly, or proved more clearly.

1. Our Lord was seen to die. His death was open and public. Foes, as well as friends, saw Him breathe His last. The soldier pierced His side with a spear, and thereout came blood and water. They came to break the legs of the three; but when they came to Him, they brake not His legs, because He was dead already. No one can doubt that He died.

2. He was seen dead by many. Those who took Him down from the Cross saw Him dead. Those who laid Him in the tomb did the same. His friends looked on sadly, and knew too well that He was indeed dead. His enemies, who had thirsted for His blood, made sure of His being really dead. Their words prove it. 'Sir,' said they to Pilate, 'we remember that that deceiver said, *while He was yet alive*, After three days I

will rise again.’\* And then they asked that the tomb might be sealed and watched, lest the disciples should come and steal the corpse, and say He was risen. There is no doubt then of His death and burial.

3. He was afterwards seen alive. Seen by many people on several occasions ; seen by those who knew Him best ; and seen first on the very day on which He had said that He should rise again. In the earlier part of this chapter, St. Paul thus sums up the various times of His showing himself alive ; ‘and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures ; and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve ; after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once ; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James ; then of all the apostles. And, last of all, He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.’† For forty days He remained on earth, thus showing Himself from time to time to various people. One was harder to be persuaded than the rest. When the other disciples told Thomas that they had

\* Matt. xxvii. 63.

† 1 Cor. xv. 4-8.

seen the Lord, his answer was, 'Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.' Even this proof our Lord gave. When next He appeared to His disciples, Thomas was with them. 'Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.' Then even Thomas was convinced. 'And Thomas answered and said, My Lord and my God!'<sup>\*</sup> Thus the very unbelief of that disciple is made a fresh proof of the resurrection. We have the account of His rising again from the very writers who describe His death. Two of them, Matthew and John, were eye-witnesses of what they tell; they saw Him on the Cross, they saw Him risen. The other two Evangelists were well acquainted with those who had seen Him, and must have heard the story again and again from various eye-witnesses. There are few facts in history which rest on so good evidence.

#### 4. The very absurdity of the only other story

<sup>\*</sup> John, xx. 27, 28.

ever told to account for the body being gone, is a further proof of the truth of the resurrection. For, in every case, where those who are very anxious to disprove a fact, can bring forward against it nothing but a weak argument, or an improbable story, this does but strengthen the proof of the fact. Now, what was the story told by the Jews? They bribed the soldiers to say that, while they slept, the disciples came and stole the corpse. While they slept! Why, it was death to a Roman soldier, to sleep on his post; yet here a whole band of them did so, and all at once, and so soundly that the stone was rolled away and the body removed without their being aroused. Who can believe this, or that the soldiers would willingly accuse themselves, unless assured that their commander knew that the tale was false, and therefore would not punish them? And this, of course, is the meaning of the priests and elders, 'And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him (probably by another bribe) and secure you.' Besides, if they were asleep, how could they know what took place? Their story was worth nothing, even on their own showing. And, further, who can think the disciples would have *dared* to do such a thing? Those timid men,



who, a few hours before, had all forsaken their Master and fled at the first appearance of danger,—who can suppose that they would have dared to come in the darkness of the night, and, in the face of a band of soldiers, set there on purpose to guard the tomb, to steal away the corpse? And for what? Granting that they dared to do it, and could do it, why should they? What motive was there? It would have done them no good to have the corpse. It would have brought them no comfort or hope, but just the contrary. That lifeless body, fast going to corruption, would have been the death of all their hopes. It would have told them, that their Master had deceived them, that there was no resurrection for Him or for them. Every hope he had ever held out to them would have been proved false and vain, if they had had the dead body to show them that Jesus was *not* risen. So foolish and impossible is the story, that, though ‘commonly reported among the Jews,’ it cannot really have been believed. It was but a vain invention, to get rid of a plain truth.

Yes, it *is* a truth, a sure and blessed truth, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day, as He had said. Let us thank God

that so blessed a fact is so fully proved. It is a blessed fact indeed; for consider what our state would be, if it were not true. The apostle shows us this in the 17th and 18th verses; 'if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.' Only suppose for an instant, that His body went to corruption, and that He was never seen again; where then would our faith be, and what our hope? All would be dark. Every ray of hope would be gone. The name of Jesus would bring no comfort to our hearts. If there were no Christ risen, then Christ crucified would be nothing to us, His sufferings and death would be of no avail. All must come to nothing,—all faith, all hope, all love, all joy,—if Christ did not rise from the dead.

The apostle turns from the thought. 'But now,' says he, '*is* Christ risen from the dead.' As though he had said, 'Away with such a thought, away with this groundless supposition! It is not true, we need not distress ourselves with it, Christ *is* risen.' Yes, Christ is risen. No reasoning can disprove it, no enemy can rob us of this truth, there is no doubt or un-

certainty here, 'Now is Christ risen from the dead.'

II. We now come to the matter of *faith* contained in the latter part of the text; that Jesus Christ, in rising from the dead, became 'the first-fruits of them that slept.'

The meaning of this is, that all who die in the Lord will also rise again, that His resurrection is a pledge of theirs. This exactly agrees with what St. Paul says to the Colossians, 'And He is the head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead;' \* and also with those words of St. John in the Revelation, in which he speaks of Jesus Christ as 'the first-begotten of the dead.'† All these passages show that, when our Lord rose, He rose as the forerunner of His people. He triumphed over the grave, and they will be partakers of His triumph. As He rose, so will they. Thus He is the first-fruits of the dead.

It is remarkable that they are not called here the *dead*, but 'them that slept,' them that fell asleep. This great and blessed doctrine of the resurrection does indeed make the believer's

\* Col. i. 18.

† Rev. i. 5.

death only a sleep—a falling asleep, to wake again. Thus Stephen, though dying a violent death, was said ‘to fall asleep.’\* And thus our Lord, when about to raise Lazarus, said, ‘Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.’† His indeed was but a short sleep; four days only had he been in the grave; but ‘one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;’‡ it is as easy to Almighty power to bring together the scattered parts that have gone to corruption ages ago, as to put life into the body but lately dead. Like Lazarus, all who have died in the Lord do but sleep; Christ will raise them up at the last day. ‘For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.’§

Oh, what comfort is here for mourners! How is the sting of death taken away, how are partings and bereavements softened! Did they whose place upon earth has been made empty, did they but fall asleep in Christ? Then they are not perished: they are not lost, but gone before. They are with Jesus. Where, or how, we know

\* Acts, vii. 60.    † John, xi. 2.    ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 8.

§ 1 Thess. iv. 14.

not, nor need we greatly care to know ; enough for us, that they are at rest with Him, where no pain or sorrow can be ; and that when He comes, so will they. As surely as He rose, they will rise too. They do but sleep. At the last trumpet's sound they will rise again, and be clothed with glorious and immortal bodies ; and friends long parted will meet again ; and those who went before, and those who were left to weep, will live together where parting and weeping are unknown, 'and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'\*

But we who are left—with such hopes, and such comforts, and such a Saviour—how earnest should we be to have a real interest in Him by faith, that when He comes we may have a part in His coming ! To the believer all is bright, and hopeful, and happy. He can look forward without fear ; even death and the grave (though solemn they must always be) have no terrors for him, or need have none, because he is in Christ by faith. This gives, or may give, him peace. True, he must die ; but Christ has died for him, and taken the sting of death away. The grave must receive him, but the

\* 1 Thess. iv. 17, 18.

grave can boast of no victory now, for Jesus has risen, and all who are His will rise too.

Every hope of the believer is linked with Christ. 'All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.' \*

Hence it follows that none of these things belong to those who are *not* Christ's. Few words, and easily written and read; but oh! their unspeakable importance! Would you rise to meet Him when He comes, and then be with Him for ever? And would you in the meantime have all the comfort and joy of sin forgiven, and guilt removed, the sting of death taken away, and the thought of Christ's appearing a joyful instead of a fearful thought to you? Then you must now die to sin, and rise again unto righteousness; you must apply for the blood of sprinkling; you must seek Christ in earnest, and lay hold on Him by faith as your Saviour, and look to and follow Him every day as your risen Lord.

Thus, all the promises of God in Christ Jesus will become yours. Living, you will live with

\* 1 Cor. iii. 21-23.

Him ; dying, you will die unto Him. Living or dying, you will be the Lord's.\* Your death will be but a falling asleep in Christ, to awake to a joyful resurrection.

Be this your Easter wish, your Easter prayer, your Easter blessing !

\* Rom. xiv. 8.

## SERMON XII.

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### THE GREATNESS AND GOODNESS OF GOD.

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Ps. cxlvii. 3, 4.—‘He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars ; He calleth them all by their names.’

It is not without a reason that these two verses come so close together. Each by itself is full of weight ; but, taken together, their meaning is greatly increased. For both relate to the same Person : it is the very same gracious God, who both ‘healeth the broken in heart,’ and ‘telleth the number of the stars.’ Hence the chief force of the text.

Two things are here set before us : the goodness and the greatness of God ; we will consider the latter first.

1. The fourth verse teaches us the *greatness*



of God: 'He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them, all by their names.'

If we look up on a starry night, the stars seem numberless. As far as the eye can reach, they are seen; and if we look steadfastly at one point for some minutes, more stars appear there than we saw at first. It is true the stars have been counted. We are told how many can be seen by the naked eye, and how many with the help of the telescope. But what stars are they, which have thus been counted by man? Only those which he can see: and who can tell what numbers there may be beyond? Every fresh improvement in the telescope has brought to light new stars; the further our sight can reach, the more in number do we find the stars to be. Who can say then, what their number is? To us, at least, there is no limit. We come to the end of our sight, but not to the end of the stars.

But even if we could count them all, how little should we know of them besides! Looking at them at the distance of almost countless millions of miles, though we might number them, what should we know with certainty of their nature or substance? We cannot even distinguish one from another, except by its size

and brightness. And though, even to our eye, 'one star differeth from another star in glory,'\* yet this is all the difference we can see. We give to each its name, but the very names we give them betray our ignorance. Plants, and flowers, and birds, and beasts; we can name after their growth, and colour, and smell, and flight, and speed; not so the heavenly bodies; we can name *them* after our fancy only, not after our knowledge.

But God knows them all; each by itself, and all together. Countless as they may be, He can count them. His eye takes in the universe at a glance, and in His sight doubtless each star is different from all the rest. For He made them all; He gave to each its place, its course, its time, and still maintains them so. In all the vast framework of the heavens, there is nothing out of place, or out of course. Every star is what God made it, and where God placed it. He made, and placed, and keeps, and knows them all.

How beautiful is a starry sky! How humbling to the pride of man, how fit to raise the thoughts to God! How little does man seem then, and God how great! 'When

\* 1 Cor. xv. 41.

I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained ; what is man that Thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man that Thou visitest him ?' \*

Other works of God are mentioned in this psalm, which are further proofs of His greatness. 'Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. . . . He giveth snow like wool. He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth His ice like morsels ; who can stand before His cold ? He sendeth out His word, and melteth them ; He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow.' † Every change is brought about by Him. He makes the weather what He pleases. Man watches the weather, judges of it, speaks of it ; but God orders it. At His word, the sky is overcast, the rain falls, the earth is refreshed, the grass springs and grows. Frost, and snow, and ice, and cold, come at His command. He speaks again, and the sun shines, and the south wind blows, and the ice and snow disappear. We talk of the works of nature ; but they are in fact the works of

\* Ps. viii. 3, 4.

† Ib. cxlvii. 8, 16-18.

God. He who created all, orders all too. Everything is in His hand. Well may we say with the psalmist, 'Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite.' \*

2. The other verse of the text sets forth the *goodness* of God: 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.'

Sometimes a poor man is afraid to ask a favour of a great man, thinking that one with so many affairs of importance to attend to, will be neither able nor willing to concern himself about a poor man's wants.

But for His own word, we might be tempted to think in like manner of God. Some *have* thought so. 'Can I hope that the great God, who made heaven and earth, will care for *me*? Is it to be supposed that the Creator and upholder of the universe will give attention to my small concerns?' Thus the greatness of God is made to interfere with His goodness.

But does it so really? No, indeed. As if to assure us of the contrary, the greatness and the goodness of God are here declared in one breath, 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the

\* Ps. v. 5.

number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names.' If we doubt His goodness, we must doubt His greatness too, for both are set forth together. Nay, it seems that the goodness of God came first into the thoughts of the psalmist, for it is mentioned first: 'The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds;' and then follows the mention of His greatness, 'He telleth the number of the stars, He calleth them all by their names.' Far from discouraging us therefore, the greatness of God ought to assure our hearts. Surely He who telleth the number of the stars, can order our small concerns, and supply our little wants. Yes, He *can* do it, for He is great; and He *will*, for He is good.

'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.' As a kind and wise physician deals with the sick, so does God deal with the sorrowful. Is there a heart broken with sorrow for the loss of some dear one,—a husband, wife, or child? At such a time God draws near, to heal that broken heart, and bind up that sore wound. Vain is all other help then: the kindest words seem to fall almost unheeded on the ear,

the dearest friend cannot reach the depths of such a grief. But God has all power and all love. The wisdom that tells the stars, the power that spread the heavens, are now put forth to comfort that one sorrowing heart: the mighty God Himself acts the part of a physician to that wounded spirit. Gently and tenderly did He order all the circumstances of the stroke, as if even in dealing the needful blow He would give as little pain as possible; and gently and tenderly does He bind up the wound He has made. He causes the sufferer to see the hand of love, whispers inward peace, calms the troubled feelings. Words cannot describe what God can do in a time of sorrow. Many a Christian has looked back on some sore affliction, the main grief of his life, and has been able to see that his time of deepest sorrow was his time of sweetest peace also. So wisely and kindly does the good physician heal the broken in heart, and bind up their wounds.

But if human help can do little for one in deep sorrow, still less can it do for one convinced of sin. This is a wound which God has made, and which none but He can heal. Other sorrows, though really coming by God's appointment, may yet be traced to second causes;

but conviction of sin is all His work. All outward circumstances perhaps remain the same; the change is in the person himself, and a great change it is. He is careless no longer; he can no more listen unconcerned to the word of God; new feelings have been raised in him, new fears, new impressions, a new anxiety: he was asleep before, now he is awake; he feels himself a sinner, and trembles under the fear of the wrath of God. But the God of mercy and love does not leave him so. It was needful this wound should be made; now it shall be bound up. After a longer or a shorter time of anxiety, hope begins to spring up in the soul: at first perhaps only a faint glimmer now and then, followed again by fears and despondency. But this hope becomes more strong and constant; the promises of the Gospel come home to the heart, the virtue of the blood of Jesus is applied and felt, fears become weaker, faith grows,—till at length the convinced sinner is led fully to believe, his burden rolls off, and at the cross of Christ he finds peace. In some cases this happy work is short and speedy; in others, years pass by,—years of painful conflict, dis-

tressing doubt, anxious fear, gloomy misgiving, —before peace comes. We know not why this difference is; whether peace might sooner be found by all if more earnestly sought, or whether it be God's sovereign will to deal thus variously with the subjects of His grace. We know not this; but this we do know,—that every contrite heart that looks to Him does in God's good time receive healing, and every such wound of His making is sooner or later bound up by His gracious hand. The very hand that made the heavens is employed in this work; the wisdom that telleth the stars is engaged also in noting each sigh and tear of the contrite; not one is overlooked or forgotten; the Good Physician is watching the case, and the case is going on well under His skilful and loving hand, slow as its progress may seem to the sufferer himself.

Thus do the greatness and the goodness of God, when seen in one view, speak comfort and encouragement to the soul. Happy they, who can see in the countless stars their *Father's* handywork! Happy they, who, in every trouble and fear, can think with confidence of God's greatness, as engaged on their behalf!



We do not indeed *deserve* such a Friend, at once so good and so great. It is in Christ Jesus alone, that He is our Friend and Father. The believer is reconciled to God by the death of His Son; and, being reconciled, has God completely on his side; not *for* him in some of His attributes, and *against* him in others, but for him in *all*; in wisdom, love, and power: in His all-seeing eye, in His perfect knowledge, in His infinite power, in His boundless resources: all are engaged on behalf of the believer; for all things are his, because he is Christ's.\*

But if this be the believer's happy state, how is it with them that believe not? Ah! let such beware that they despise not the riches of His forbearance and long-suffering, lest one day they should seek Him in His *goodness*, and find Him only in His *greatness*! Now is the day of grace, when 'mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.'† The day will come, when they who shall have let slip this time of grace, must meet God in His greatness, and find that He who spread the heavens is *against* them. 'Seek

\* 1 Cor. iii. 21-23.

† Ps. lxxxv. 10.

ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near;’\* for, ‘ who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?’ †

\* Isa. lv. 6,

† Mal. iii. 2.

## SERMON XIII.

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### THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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JOHN, xiv. 26.—‘But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.’

IN these words our Lord told His disciples beforehand, what the Holy Spirit was to do for them. Though the promise of His coming was fulfilled long ago, and the Church of Christ has enjoyed this gift for ages, yet there is still much ignorance concerning the Holy Spirit and His work. Let us seek to learn what our Lord here teaches.

I. Let us observe, first, that the Holy Spirit is a *Person*, and not a thing. ‘The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,’ would be taken by

any plain and honest reader to mean a Person who comforts. Again, this Comforter is said to be *sent*; and this word also is most applicable to a person. The object with which He is sent goes to prove the same point: He is sent to teach and to remind. Now, though books and other things may properly be said to teach and to remind, yet when we read of one *sent* for these purposes, we naturally think rather of a *person*.

In the 7th verse of the 16th chapter, our Lord speaks of Himself as going, and of the Holy Spirit as coming. Now it is plain, that we must take both expressions in the same sense: if He who goes is a person, then He who comes must be a person too. In the same chapter, the Spirit is spoken of as coming, and reproofing, and guiding, and speaking, and hearing, and showing, and receiving;\* all the doings of a person. And in other parts of Scripture, we find that the Spirit may be tempted,† resisted,‡ and grieved;|| that He strives with sinners,§ directs ministers,¶ and does various other things, which are the proper

\* John, xvi. 8, 13-15.

† Acts, v. 9.

‡ Acts, vii. 51.

§ Eph. iv. 30.

|| Gen. vi. 3.

¶ Acts, viii. 22; xvi. 6, 7.

work of a person, and not of a mere influence or thing.

Let it be well settled in our minds then, that the Holy Spirit is a *person*, the third Person in the divine Trinity.

II. We learn next, that this divine Person, the Holy Spirit, is sent by the Father in the name of the Son; 'whom the Father will send in my name.'

Our Lord made this promise to His disciples, 'I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter;' \* and again, He taught them to pray in His name for themselves, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, He will give it you.' † This seems to explain the words, 'whom the Father will send in my name.' The Holy Spirit is sent in answer to the Saviour's prayer, and in answer to the prayers which we make in His name. Thus all the Three Persons in the Trinity are engaged in providing for our spiritual wants: the Son prays, the Father sends, the Spirit comes: and further, our own prayers for the

\* John, xiv. 16.

† Ib. xvi. 23.

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help them through that one time of sorrow, but to be with them always; 'I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.'\*

This promise extends to us; the Comforter is ours, as well as theirs. In sorrow, doubt, or fear; when friends fail, or forsake; when all around seems dark, and earthly props are removed, and earthly hopes are blasted, and we seem left helpless and alone; these are the times when the Comforter will be sent in answer to prayer. There is no comfort like His; so deep, so true, so tender. Earthly comforters may speak to the ear, but the Spirit reaches the heart. *They* may be parted from us by circumstances; the wide sea may roll between us and them; business, duties, engagements, may keep them from giving even such comfort as they otherwise might give. But no distance, no circumstances, can separate us from 'The Comforter.' Wherever we are, there He is too; always at hand to soothe, support, and cheer.

2. The Holy Spirit is our *Teacher*; 'He shall teach you all things.' Our Lord Himself

\* John, xiv. 16.

Spirit have a promise of acceptance, when offered in the name of the Son of God.

Let us look on this, not as a mere dry point of doctrine, but as a most encouraging truth. With what assurance may we pray! How confidently may we expect the gift of the Spirit! The Three Persons of the blessed Trinity are engaged on our behalf, and we ourselves are taught how to pray with acceptance.

III. Having considered these two points, let us now come to the main subject of the text, the office of the Holy Spirit; in other words, what He was to do for the disciples and for us.

1. The very name by which He is called throws some light upon this,—‘The Comforter.’

The disciples were in a state of sorrow and fear. Soon their Master was to leave them; He had told them so; and then how helpless and forlorn would they be! It was to comfort them under this trouble, and to supply His place when He should be gone, that our Lord promised that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, should come to them; and come, not merely to



help them through that one time of sorrow, but to be with them always; 'I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.' \*

This promise extends to us; the Comforter is ours, as well as theirs. In sorrow, doubt, or fear; when friends fail, or forsake; when all around seems dark, and earthly props are removed, and earthly hopes are blasted, and we seem left helpless and alone; these are the times when the Comforter will be sent in answer to prayer. There is no comfort like His; so deep, so true, so tender. Earthly comforters may speak to the ear, but the Spirit reaches the heart. *They* may be parted from us by circumstances; the wide sea may roll between us and them; business, duties, engagements, may keep them from giving even such comfort as they otherwise might give. But no distance, no circumstances, can separate us from 'The Comforter.' Wherever we are, there He is too; always at hand to soothe, support, and cheer.

2. The Holy Spirit is our *Teacher*; 'He shall teach you all things.' Our Lord Himself

\* John, xiv. 16.

taught His disciples much, but the Holy Spirit, when He should be gone, was to teach them more; 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.'\* This is now the Spirit's office, to teach us all things needful for our souls, and to guide us into all truth.

And what are the things which the Spirit teaches us? This also may be learnt from our Lord's words to His disciples:—

(1.) 'He will show you things to come.' In their case, this meant probably the gift of prophecy, which they were to receive. In ours, it means leading us to think of the future, and giving us a clear view and a deep impression of eternal things. We are apt to let temporal things get such hold upon us, that eternity is forgotten; it is the Spirit's work to keep eternity in our minds. Is a sinner brought to tremble under the apprehension of the future? Does a lukewarm Christian receive a fresh and vivid impression of eternity? Is a believer enabled to rejoice in the prospect of glory? This is the effect of the Spirit, show-

\* John, xvi. 12, 13.

ing them things to come. How important is this work ! How needful and how good, in a world of temptation and vanity, to be continually reminded of eternity by this inward voice !

(2.) 'He will reprove [or convince] the world.'\* Another part of the Spirit's teaching is to convince of sin, to make us feel that we are sinners. Arguments may prove this, eloquence may enforce it, the understanding may be convinced of it ; but the Spirit alone can make the heart feel it. Many who make a fair show, have never experienced this work of the Spirit. Yet, till it be felt, how sad is their state ! They have no pardon, for they have never really sought it ; no interest in Christ, for they feel no need of Him ; no access to the throne of grace, for they do not come to it as sinners. How needful then is this work of conviction ! How impossible to have the true hope of the Gospel without it !

(3.) 'He shall testify of me.'† The Spirit bears witness in the heart to Christ, shows Him to the awakened sinner as a Saviour, and

\* John, xvi. 8.

† Ib. xv. 26.

causes the report of Him to be believed.\* Ah! who but the awakened sinner himself, can tell how precious is this work of the Spirit? Conscience has been aroused, things to come have been opened to his view, he has become alive to guilt and danger, judgment and eternity lie before him; whither shall he flee? where find safety and comfort? It is to no purpose that friends try to persuade him that all is well; a more powerful voice within gives the lie to what they say. 'No worse than others,' will not quiet conscience now. 'Peace, peace! where there is no peace,'† deceives him no more. He finds no comfort to his troubled mind, till Christ is revealed in his heart by the Spirit. Then hope springs up, and he finds 'the Comforter' a comforter indeed.

But the Spirit testifies of Christ in other hearts besides those of the newly convinced. Christ is the life, the food, the strength, of every believer; his comfort, peace, and joy: and this is through the work of the Spirit. He is continually testifying of Christ in the believer's soul; taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto him. Often, in the reading of the Bible, some passage concerning

\* Isa. liii. 1.

† Jer. vi. 14.

Christ strikes him more forcibly than ever, or he perceives it for the first time to relate to Christ; new light seems to shine on it; he sees in it a depth of meaning unseen before. This is the Spirit testifying of Christ. Or, in some time of prayer or meditation, the thought of Christ, in His person or His work, touches his heart more than usual; his affections go out towards Him, his heart is filled with love, the Saviour is seen to be unspeakably precious. This, again, is the Spirit testifying of Christ. Let us cherish such seasons! They are the fruit of our Saviour's intercession, 'I will pray the Father:' and the answer perhaps to prayers of ours, which we feared were not heard, or did not expect to be answered thus: they are our happiest, because our most spiritual, times; a foretaste of that time to come, when 'the things of Christ' will be our happiness for ever.

(4.) In like manner does the Spirit lead into *all* truth; not merely the truth of our own sinfulness, or of our Saviour's preciousness, but into every other part of the truth of God, which it is for our souls' good that we should know. Many things in the Bible, once dark

or confused to us, the Spirit unfolds by degrees : many dealings of Providence, which once we could not understand, the Spirit reveals to us. We are in the school of God ; the Bible is our text-book, the Spirit our teacher : and, if apt and humble and diligent scholars, we are ever learning something new. Our book indeed has had *all* in it, ever since we began to learn ; but our teacher explains it to us more and more fully, showing us often a new meaning in what we thought we understood well before, deepening our impression of what we did understand, and thus, step by step, leading us on.

(5.) ‘He shall glorify me,’\* said our Lord. And Christ is glorified, when sinners are thus converted and believers built up. The more we learn of Christ, the more do we both love Him and magnify Him ; the deeper is His place in our hearts, the higher does He stand in our esteem ; our duties are better done, our post of labour is better filled. Thus Christ is glorified, as the Spirit causes us to grow in the knowledge of Him.

Alas, that many who are panting after other

\* John, xvi. 14.

kinds of knowledge, should be content to make no progress in *this* ! Knowledge is good : but the best of all knowledge is the knowledge of Christ, and the highest wisdom is that which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; yet these, numbers are content to want.

3. The Holy Spirit is our *Reminder* ; ‘He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.’

The Apostles, before they received the Holy Ghost, were apt to forget the things they had learnt of their Master. Once He rebuked them for this ; ‘Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?’\* But afterwards, it would appear, not only did many things which they had not understood become clear to them, but many which they had forgotten came to their recollection. For instance, our Lord had said, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up:’† and we read, ‘When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples *remembered* that He had said this unto them ; and they believed the Scripture,

\* Matt. xvi. 9.

† John, ii. 19.

and the words which Jesus had said.' \* Again, we read, respecting His triumphal approach to Jerusalem and the prophecy concerning it; 'These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then *remembered* they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him.' † And doubtless much of our Lord's teaching, many of the words they had heard fall from His lips while addressing a mixed multitude, and many which he had spoken to themselves apart, were brought back to their minds by the Spirit when He was gone, and that, with a meaning unperceived before. The very Gospels themselves are a fulfilment of this promise; recording, as they do, not only parables and miracles more easily remembered, but also (and this Gospel of St. John especially) long, connected, discourses, brought back to the minds of the writers by inspiration after many years, and then written for our use.

But the Holy Spirit acts the part of a Reminder to us, as well as to them; He both teaches us new things, and reminds us of old. For instance,—a Christian is in trouble, through

\* John, ii. 22,

† Ib. xii. 16.



some heavy calamity, or some grievous loss : in the midst of his despondency, some well-known text of Scripture, exactly suited to his case, comes to his mind and gives him comfort ; no friend, no book, suggests it ; it comes, he knows not how : it is brought to his remembrance by the Holy Spirit. Again, a child of pious parents, early taught like Timothy to know the Scriptures, the child of many prayers, takes a wrong course : he goes far astray, and spends many years in sin, and all early training seems forgotten ; at length, in a foreign land (I am speaking of a real case) the soldier, who became so against his parents' wishes, and only to escape from the restraints of home, is smitten with a fatal disease, brought on by excess in a hot climate, and lies on his death-bed : and now, things long forgotten come back to his mind, a mother's words are remembered, Bible truths once well known are thought of again, and strike him as they never struck him before, he feels them in his heart, the arrow of conviction strikes home ; he dies, but he dies a penitent believer. Who was it that reminded him of those forgotten truths ? Who spoke again to his heart a mother's words, with more than a mother's power ? The Holy Spirit.

Thus were those prayers answered: thus were those early lessons, neglected at the time, brought to his remembrance by the Comforter.

And what Christian is there, who has not experienced the same kind of influence; when, in the hour of temptation, sorrow, weakness, or fear, the Word of God has been brought with power to his soul, strengthening, comforting, and assuring him? At such times, we should be apt to forget the very things most needful to be remembered, did not the Spirit bring them to our minds. But just at our greatest need, He comes to our help by this simple means,—reminding us of some text of Scripture, of some passage in a sermon, of something that has passed in conversation, or of some impression once made on our minds. Often does the Spirit thus remind us, by way of comfort and guidance; often too, in the way of warning. Not seldom has one, in improper or doubtful company, seemed to hear addressed to him the question, ‘What doest thou here?’\*—or the solemn words, ‘Thou, God, seest me!’† have come with startling effect to the remembrance. What is this

\* 1 Kings, xix. 9.

† Gen. xvi. 13.

‘still small voice,’ but the voice of the Spirit reminding him?

The presence of this Comforter, this teacher of the heart, this reminder of things forgotten, is one of the greatest blessings we can have. There is indeed no peace, no life, for those who have not the Spirit. ‘If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.’\*

‘Quench not the Spirit!’† However He may speak, listen to His voice. Welcome His comfort, follow His guidance, be humble under His warning and reproof, ‘walk in the Spirit.’‡ ‘To be spiritually minded is life and peace:’§ and there is no way to this, but earnest and constant prayer for the Spirit, and an honest following of His teaching. ‘Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.’||

\* Rom. viii. 9.      † 1 Thess. v. 19.      ‡ Gal. v. 16.

§ Rom. viii. 6.      || John, xvi. 24.

## SERMON XIV.

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### JESUS NOT KNOWN.

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John, i. 26, 27.—‘ John answered them, saying, I baptize with water : but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not ; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.’

SEVEN hundred years before he came, John the Baptist had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah in these words, ‘ The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’ \* And about 400 years before he came, he had been foretold by the prophet Malachi thus, ‘ Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.’ † There is no doubt whatever that John was the person meant in both these prophecies : for he himself,

\* Isa. xl. 3.

† Mal. iii. 1.

speaking by inspiration, said, 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias;'<sup>\*</sup> and the three other Evangelists all speak of John the Baptist as the person referred to, both in that prophecy and in the prophecy of Malachi.<sup>†</sup>

Accordingly, when he came, he did exactly what is there figuratively described. He prepared the way of the Lord Jesus, by preaching to the people that they should repent, by baptizing, and by pointing out Jesus when He appeared. He took no honour to himself. 'He confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.'<sup>‡</sup> He wished to be thought of as what the prophets had foretold he should be, and no more; the forerunner of Christ; the messenger sent before His face, to prepare His way before Him. His whole object was to fulfil this office, to glorify Christ, and to draw men to Him; and it was with this object that he spoke the words of the text in reply to the inquiries of the Jews.

<sup>\*</sup> John, i. 23.

<sup>†</sup> Matt. iii. 3; xi. 10. Mark, i. 2, 3. Luke, i. 76; iii. 4; vii. 27.

<sup>‡</sup> John, i. 20.

Among several others which might be mentioned, there are two chief points here :

1. The *greatness* of Christ.
2. That He was *unknown* to those among whom He stood.

1. Our minds are drawn here to the greatness of Christ, as compared with the Baptist himself.

John himself was a remarkable person. His birth had been foretold to his parents by an angel, by whom also his name was given beforehand, and his office as the forerunner of Christ declared. His manner of life was different from that of other men. His clothing was that of a prophet. He lived apart from others. He led a holy and devoted life. So great was the effect of his character and preaching, that, as we read, ‘then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.’\* Our Lord Himself said of him, ‘Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of woman, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.’†

But, great as John was, he was but the fore-

\* Matt. iii. 56.

† Ib. xi. 11.

runner of One greater. In ancient times it was the custom, when a king travelled, for a herald to go before him to announce his coming and prepare the way. The herald was received with attention and respect wherever he went. He came in the dress and dignity of his office, he was generally met by the chief people of the place, and crowds came together to see and hear. But it was only his *office* that made the herald great. He came in the king's name, to say that the king himself was coming. As for him, he was only the messenger; and, had it not been for his office and his message, he would have been no more than other men. So John was but a herald: a faithful one, it is true; a worthy messenger, a devoted servant; but still only such. All his greatness was drawn from Him, whose coming he proclaimed. Jesus was the King, John the herald. He asked no honour for himself; he would not take it when offered: his only object was to exalt Christ; 'whose shoe's latchet,' said he, 'I am not worthy to unloose.' This was no false humility; John knew his own littleness, and his Master's greatness, and could not bear that any part of the honour due to the King should be given to the messenger. Again and

again he said in various forms, 'He that cometh after me is mightier than I.'\*

How strongly opposed was this conduct of John to the common fault of too much exalting man! What a rebuke do his words seem to give to those especially who over-praise *ministers*,—thus exalting the herald in place of the King! The same fault which in St. Paul's time led one to say, 'I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos,'† thus giving honour to him who planted and him who watered, instead of to God who gave the increase,—this same fault still prevails. 'Man praises man.' An attractive preacher is exalted above measure, to his own great danger and to the injury of his usefulness, instead of all the glory being given to God. Less attention is given to the message, than to the words in which it is delivered and enforced; and people are more taken up with the tone and manner of a particular minister, than filled with thoughts of the great and gracious Saviour on whose errand of love he comes.

In every sense, the words of John were true; 'He that cometh after me is mightier than I.' 'He it is, who coming after me is preferred

\* Matt. iii. 11.

† 1 Cor. iii. 4.



before me; whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.' John was a mere man; a holy and devoted man, it is true, but still a man, and therefore sinful; Jesus was God as well as man, perfect in holiness, 'in whom was no sin.' John did but come with a message, to prepare the way; but Jesus came to *save*. John came to bear witness of the light;\* but Jesus was Himself 'the Light of the world.'† John baptized with water; but Jesus had power to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire.‡ Jesus was the Bridegroom of the Church; John was but the friend of the Bridegroom. 'He must increase,' said he, after our Saviour's public appearance; 'but I must decrease.' Till the King came, the herald was of great consequence; but then he was eclipsed. 'He that cometh from above,' he added (meaning Jesus), 'is above all: he that is of the earth [meaning himself] is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all.' §

2. But, great as He was, our Lord was unknown to those among whom He stood; 'There standeth One among you, whom ye know not.'

\* John, i. 8.      † Ib. vii. 12.      ‡ Matt. iii. 11.

§ John, iii. 29, 31.

Perhaps John meant, that at that very moment Jesus was standing among them unknown. At the time when John spoke, a crowd stood around him by the river's side; perhaps Jesus Himself was there. He stood among them, they saw Him, heard Him, touched Him;—JESUS, the promised, expected, and longed for; the Messiah; 'the Desire of all nations;' \* yet they knew Him not, for He was not yet revealed.

And even after that, when John had pointed Him out in those plain words, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,' † when His person was well known, and when the crowds who used to follow John had begun to follow Jesus, still those words applied to the greater number, 'There standeth One among you, *whom ye know not.*' They knew Him by the eye, but not with the heart. Only a few forsook all and followed Him. Of the rest it might be said, 'He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.' ‡

And do not the same words express too truly the state of many *now*? 'There standeth One

\* Haggai, ii. 7.    † John, i. 29.    ‡ Ib. i. 10, 11.

among you, whom ye know not.' They are Christians in name and profession; they may even keep up the outward forms of religion, frequenting church, and perhaps partaking of the Lord's Supper. Thus Jesus stands among them, as it were, in His ordinances, but He stands among them *unknown*. They are not conscious of His presence; they do not love it, or seek it; they do not see Him with the eye of faith. Religious ordinances, though meant to lead to Christ, are to such little better than an empty form. They do not realise the promise, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'\* With no faith, no love, no heart-felt acquaintance with Him, what does their knowledge of Christ amount to? Alas! will *such* a knowledge *save*? He stands among them unknown, for the very same reason that made the multitude at Bethabara ignorant of Him,—because He is not yet revealed.

There is but one way of really knowing Jesus; He must be revealed in the heart by the Spirit. Even John the Baptist, though sent to prepare His way, did not know Him till expressly made known by the Spirit: 'And

\* Matt. xviii. 20.

John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending like a dove, and it abode upon Him, and I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.\* And when John pointed Him out to all so plainly, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,' even then, as we have seen, not all who heard Him believed. There *must* be a work of grace in the heart, in order that Christ may truly be known there. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to testify of Christ; to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us;† and so show them, that we may not merely own them true, but feel and embrace them. Alas! how many there are, who, so far from having experienced this work of the Spirit, do not even know their need of it; content to pass a lifetime in carelessness, or at the best in a round of cold and formal religious ordinances, without ever getting at the *heart* of religion, or seeking to come nearer to Christ than mere forms can bring

\* John, i. 32-34.

† Ib. xvi. 14.

them. And many more there are, who, though they do see some necessity for a deeper religion than this, yet have not learnt the only source of it in the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Never will any have spiritual religion, or obtain a true knowledge of Christ, by any other means. Till revealed to them by the Spirit, Christ will stand among them still as one whom they know not.

This is not a point of small importance,—whether we know Christ or not. We *must* know Him, if we would be saved by Him. And further, without this knowledge, we cannot be happy even here. Where shall we find comfort in trouble, help in difficulty, strength in weakness, if we know not Christ? What peace shall we enjoy, if we have not *His* peace? Who shall smooth the dying pillow of those, whose hearts are ignorant of Him? Ah! let Him not be as a stranger among those who bear His name. Let Him not merely stand among us, as it were, in His ordinances; but may He be known by us in our hearts. True, we are not worthy to do Him the smallest service, or even to come into His presence; but our unworthiness is no bar to our coming, if we come feeling and

owning it. 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.'\* When once we truly know Him through the Spirit, then all His character and offices, His goodness and grace, and even His very greatness itself, will bring comfort to our hearts; and we shall rejoice in those words of St. John, 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.'†

\* John, vi. 37.

† Ib. i. 14.

## SERMON XV.

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### THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST; FORESEEN BY HIM, AND WITHOUT HUMAN SYMPATHY.

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LUKE, XVIII. 31-34.—‘ Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on : and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death : and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things : and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.’

It is happy for us, that we do not know what is before us. If we could see beforehand all the sorrows and troubles that lie in our path, then they would come upon us all at once, as it were, and be more than we could

bear. In very mercy, God has ordered it otherwise. We know not what a day may bring forth; we do not see our troubles till they arrive. Thus they come one by one, and we are strengthened to bear them.

Again, the sympathy of others is a great comfort in trouble. Few are so much alone in the world, as to have none to pity them, to enter into their feelings, to feel for their grief, to take a kind interest in their fears and apprehensions. If there are no near relations at hand, at least some kind friends or neighbours will be found. And even if not, strangers are often raised up in the time of trouble, to show sympathy and kindness when least expected.

The man of sorrows had neither of these comforts. The text shows us, that He knew all that was coming upon Him; and that, when He spoke to His nearest friends about it, they were so far from giving Him sympathy, that they could not even understand what He meant. Here then we have two distinct points in the sufferings of our Lord: He saw His sufferings beforehand; and He had no human friend to sympathize with Him. We will consider these two points in their order.



1. He knew all His sufferings beforehand.

Every word that the prophets had written about the sufferings of the Messiah was known to Jesus, and He was aware that all must be fulfilled in Him. His mind dwelt on this subject as He went up to Jerusalem, His thoughts were full of those ancient prophecies and their expected fulfilment. The time was at hand. He was now on His way, to the very place where all was to be done; a few days more, and He would be in the hands of His enemies.

And what were the things, that had been written by the prophets concerning the Son of man? Time would fail to answer this question fully; for even we can see, that, besides those prophecies which are quite plain, Christ and His sufferings are spoken of in many a passage, which seems at first sight to point to some other person only. How much more then must have been in the thoughts of Him, who knew the full meaning of every part!

But there is one of the Psalms, which is so clear and precise, that no one can doubt that it is a prophecy about Christ. I mean the 22nd Psalm. Probably this very Psalm was in our

another, forsaken by all. He saw Himself in the hands, first of the bitter Jews, then of the cruel soldiers. Already the crown of thorns seemed to press His forehead; already He seemed to wear the purple robe, to be mocked, spit upon, and smitten; already in thought He heard the cry 'Crucify Him, Crucify Him!'—toiled under the weight of the cross, and felt the piercing of His hands and feet, and the long pain and weariness of that six hours' hanging on the cross. And, worst of all, perhaps He had already the foretaste of that anguish of mind which wrung from His lips the cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

2. Now, if, as He went towards Jerusalem full of such thoughts as these, He had been accompanied by those who knew all, and could enter into His feelings, share His natural fears, and sympathize with Him in the sad prospect,—however unable they might be to help Him, yet there would have been comfort in their sympathy. But even this comfort Jesus had not. When He told them, they could not understand Him. Plainly as He spoke, 'they understood none of these things.' Once before,

when He spoke to them in Galilee on the same subject, they did seem to have some understanding of His meaning, for we read that 'they were exceeding sorry.'\* But, whether that sorrow was only caught from His, or whether they had at that time some faint idea of His meaning, certain it is that *now* they had none. 'They understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.' No! He must bear it all alone. He must go along the way, surrounded in person, but alone in heart and feeling: with fears and sorrows pressing on Him, but not one near who could help Him to bear the burden, none to cheer, none to feel, none even to understand. Yes, there was One even then: yet not man, but God. Looking forward to a time when He should be even more alone, He said, 'And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.'

Thus our Lord knew all that lay before Him at Jerusalem, and had to bear it all alone. Yet He went on. Though every step brought Him nearer to suffering and death, He turned not aside, nor slackened His pace. In the very same

\* Matt. xvii. 22, 23.

breath in which He spoke of His coming sufferings there, He said, 'Behold we go up to Jerusalem.' Why did He go, when He knew that suffering and death awaited Him there? Why go to a place filled, as He knew, with His enemies? Why not change His purpose, and go back to Galilee, and again go about there doing good, or live in some place where He might be safe and loved? Because He would save sinners, though it must be by His own sufferings and death. He had undertaken the work of man's salvation, and nothing could make Him give it up. Love brought Him from heaven; love led Him to take on Him the form of a servant, to become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, to submit to ill-treatment from the very race He came to save; and the same love led Him to persevere to the end. He felt all the bitterness of the cup of suffering,—witness His agony and prayer in the garden,—yet He would not draw back; 'Father!' He said, 'if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.'\*

This man of sorrows was our Saviour. It was to save our souls, that He thus suffered and

\* Luke, xxii. 42.

died ; it was the burden of our guilt, that He was bearing in the garden and on the cross. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' What are your feelings towards Him ? Do you love Him, for His great love to you ? Have you given Him your heart ? And does His love constrain you, giving a tone to your whole life, and influencing you in all you do ?

It is for this, that He calls us to tread the same path which He trod before us, the path of suffering ; thus it is, that He would draw our hearts to Himself. It is not because He delights to pain us, that afflictions come, and friends are taken, and sorrow presses upon some so heavily, that this world becomes to them a very ' vale of tears : ' but it is because He loves us, and would draw us to Himself, that in Him we may find life and peace. Shall we think it hard to be called to follow Him in the path of suffering ? Shall we murmur, because He who became for us ' a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,'

lays upon us, for our souls' good, some portion of sorrow too ?

Light are all our sufferings compared with His. He bore for our sake a far heavier weight than He will lay on us. And in our trouble He gives us comforts, which He Himself was content to be without. Our troubles come upon us one by one ; His were all foreseen in one view. He had not one human friend near, who could help Him in the prospect by sympathy ; we have not to bear trouble all alone. True it is that circumstances differ, and that sometimes the very feeling of loneliness and friendlessness is itself the trouble. But generally, we have those who share and sympathize in our sorrows. Often, the very same stroke that falls on one, falls equally on another, and thus makes a real fellowship in suffering. The husband's grief is the grief of the wife also : the affliction that befalls son or daughter, presses with equal heaviness on a loving parent. Even if the trouble itself be not shared, yet, in many cases, so true a sympathy is felt, that the comfort to the sufferer is the same. Such warmth of kindness is shown, such active love is called forth, so many friendly feelings appear, so many soothing words are spoken, that part of

the burden seems thus removed. Few sufferers are quite without such sympathy. But grant that some are so ; that no kind friends are near ; that they live among strangers, coldhearted and indifferent ; that whatever sorrow comes to them, they must bear it alone ; and that this very loneliness of life and heart is to them a standing trouble. Yet there is one Friend always near, the Saviour Himself. He, who for our sake would be without a friend, will be a friend to us in every grief. In great things and in small ; in those sorer trials which come but seldom, and in the lesser trials of daily life ; in all that causes sorrow, depression, or fear ; Jesus our Saviour feels for us. He may be pleased to call us to walk along our path through life, unblest with much of human sympathy ; but He Himself is with us. We may speak to Him freely of all things ; we may open to Him every grief and apprehension. He will understand them all, no secret feeling will be hidden from Him, He will know the things which we say. Even before we speak of them, He knows them all ; and so perfect is His sympathy, that His insight into our case is even deeper than our own, His feeling for us greater than even our own consciousness of suffering.

Let us *love* Him, who was content to bear so much for us. Let us give Him the first place in our hearts; let us trust in Him, cleave to Him, live to Him. And, if it please Him to lead us by a rough way, still let us remember who sends the trouble, and why. He sends it, who Himself suffered far more for our sakes; and He sends it in very love to our souls. He does but call us to tread in His steps; to bear the cross, that we may wear the crown, to 'suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.'\*

\* Rom. viii. 17.



## SERMON XVI.

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### THE PATIENCE OF JOB, AND THE END OF THE LORD.

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JAM. v. 11.—‘Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord : that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.’

THERE are many who would not agree with the Apostle,—‘we count them happy which *endure*.’ ‘No,’ they would say, ‘we count them happy, with whom life goes smoothly ; who have no care, or trouble, or sickness, or sorrow ; such we consider happy people.’ But would this be a right judgment ? No ; far from it. It might be, if this life were all ; or if it were *possible* to go through life without trouble. But this life is *not* all, and ‘man is born unto

trouble as the sparks fly upwards.’\* There is a life beyond the grave, and our troubles here have a great deal to do with our happiness there. Trouble is *sure* to come; the question is, how we shall bear it.

St. James does not say he counts them happy which *have* trouble, but them which *endure* it; that is, endure or bear it with *patience*. This word ‘endure’ is in fact the very same word as the word ‘patience’ in the same verse, ‘the patience of Job.’ Merely to *have* trouble is not a happy thing, but to be able by grace to bear it patiently, is. Many fret under trouble; no lot, they think, is so hard as theirs; *they* are not happy. The happiness is not in affliction itself, but in the way in which it is borne, and in the effects which it produces. A patient sufferer, bearing meekly, and still trusting in God, is the person here called happy.

An instance of such a person is brought forward, the well-known instance of Job. He was a sufferer indeed. When the story of him begins, he was a rich and prosperous man, with a large family and great possessions, ‘the greatest of all the men of the East.’ But troubles came, one after another. God let them

\* Job, v. 7.

come, to try him. First the Sabeans fell upon his oxen and asses, and took them away, and slew all the servants, save him who brought the news: next, his flocks with their shepherds (all but one) were killed by fire from heaven: then, the Chaldeans robbed him of all his camels, and slew all the keepers but one: and lastly, all his seven sons, and, as it would seem, his three daughters too, were killed at once, by the fall of the house in which they were met together. Thus, from a very rich man, Job was brought to poverty; and of all his large family, not one was left. But even this was not all. Satan now got leave to afflict him yet further. His body was covered 'with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown;' he sat down in misery among the ashes; and so much altered was he in appearance, that his three friends, when they came, did not know him.

Such were Job's sufferings. And how did he bear them? With patience; though not with *perfect* patience. He was but a man, and no man is perfect. It is striking, to find persons singled out in Scripture for particular graces, yet mentioned also as failing in those very points. 'Faithful Abraham' was guilty of a *want* of faith, when he represented his wife as

But, you may say, surely it would have been happier for Job not to have suffered: to bear with patience, may be happier than to fret; but not to have to bear at all, must be happier still. Now, without going further into Job's history at present, I do not hesitate to say, that notwithstanding loss and pain, he was a *gainer* by what he endured. Do you ask how? Because he learnt so much of God in his affliction. Probably he learnt more during that time than in all his life before; enjoyed closer communion with God, had a clearer insight into His dealings, experienced more of His goodness, was more deeply humbled, and had his faith more strengthened: it was a time of great good to his soul. And was not *this* a blessing? There is no blessing so great, as that our *souls* should prosper. Come by what means it may,—by trouble, loss, or pain—the blessing makes up for all; we are gainers and not losers; we are *happy* which endure. God very often uses such means to do us good; chastising us as a Father, pruning us as a vine-dresser, trying us as silver is tried. Let us not think at such times that He deals hardly with us. He is but teaching us in the same school in which He taught Job. He is

doing us good, though in His own way. Wisdom and love guide His hand, even when it is directed against our dearest delights.

Thus far of 'the patience of Job.' But the Apostle reminds us also of something else—'the end of the Lord.' What does this mean? Plainly, the end which God gave to the sufferings of Job. As though it were said, 'Ye have heard how patiently Job bore his sufferings, and what a happy end God gave to them, showing how full of mercy and pity He is.' Now what *was* 'the end of the Lord' in Job's case? We read as follows: 'And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.' We find his friends coming with presents, his cattle twice as many as they had been before, seven sons and three daughters born to him to make up for those he had lost; and we read that he lived after this 'an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons and his sons' sons, even four generations,' and at length 'died, being old and full of days.' Thus it was that 'the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning.'\*

\* Job, xlii. 10-17.

I was once visiting the sick-bed of a miserable old man, an unbeliever, and a scoffer at the Scriptures. He was quite uneducated, not able even to read, but naturally shrewd and clever. He kept a beer-shop; and, from the company that frequented the house, had picked up a good deal of information on various subjects; and, among other things, he had gained some knowledge of the Bible,—alas! only to disbelieve and scoff. One day when I was visiting him, he brought forward this argument against the Scriptures: ‘Why,’ said he, ‘they make God reward one of His most faithful servants, by sending him all the misfortunes you can think of; his goods were stolen, and his servants killed, his children all died in one day, and he himself was covered with boils from head to foot.’ ‘Well,’ I replied, ‘but do you know the *end* of that story?’ ‘End?’ he said, ‘no, I never heard any more than what I say.’ ‘Then I will tell you the end,’ I said. And I did tell him the end, just as it is written in the Bible. He had not a word to say. It was all new to him. And he owned afterwards, that *that* objection at least was groundless; and that the Lord had been to Job, not hard and cruel as he had

supposed, but 'very pitiful and of tender mercy.' I thought it a striking instance of the *ignorance* of those who set themselves against the Word of God.

Yes! the Lord was indeed 'very pitiful and of tender mercy' to Job. But not only when He restored to him health, and goods, and children. He was just the same, when He took them all away. In all Job's trials, the Lord's eye was over him for good; all was working together for a happy end. The blessing could be *seen* in the end; but it had been with him all along.

Thus it is with all the servants of God. Even in their sharpest trials, the Lord is 'very pitiful and of tender mercy.' It is not in anger but in love, that He deals with them thus; and He pities the very sorrows which He sees good to send. 'Whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.'\* Oh that the eye of faith were as bright as the eye of sense! Oh that we could look through all losses and trials, and see above them all the same unchanging God, still loving us, still doing all things well, still ordering all in infinite wisdom and mercy, and sure to make

\* Heb. xii. 6.

all work together for our good ! It was a great triumph of faith, to say in the very midst of affliction, ' Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' \*

The other part of Job's experience, the happy end, does also apply to God's servants in general, though not always in the same way. ' The end of the Lord,' the end which He gives to their troubles, is such as to display His compassion and mercy. Not that He always restores the very thing He has taken away. The bereaved parent does not recover that precious child, which God first gave, and then early took away ; the lost fortune perhaps is not regained ; nor the diseased body restored to health. But God has *many* ways of blessing. When He takes away one thing, He can make up for it by another. And often, even in this life, He sends to the afflicted new comforts and blessings, different, it is true, from those lost, but as good or better.

But even suppose it is not so, and that trials continue to the end ; yet that end is not really the end : for after the end comes eternity. Taken in its highest meaning, ' the end of the Lord,' the end which He gives to the afflictions

\* Job, xiii. 15.



of His people, is to place them where trials are unknown, and where they will enjoy for ever, and without fear of change, blessings far greater than ever Job had on earth, before or after his trials. In short, the true 'end of the Lord' to His suffering servants is HEAVEN. There, all the pain of past afflictions will be forgotten; and, in the enjoyment of 'an exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' the 'light affliction,' which was but for a moment, will be entirely lost.\* Ah! if your trials be sometimes hard to bear, and troubles come thick upon troubles, as the messengers of evil tidings came to Job,—think of 'the end of the Lord.' Every moment brings it nearer; the trials that now press so heavily will be neither heavier nor longer than necessary; God will support and strengthen you;—and at length His end will come, the good and happy end, which nothing can put off one moment beyond His appointed time, and which will be better to you than your fondest hopes could paint. Only, let not your faith fail; rest in Christ Jesus; let patience have her perfect work; and you will see at last, how gracious the Lord has been to you in *all* His dealings.

\* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Such is the comfort, which the afflicted servant of God may draw from the text. For we gather the character of those to whom these words of St. James were addressed, from the 7th and 8th verses: they were suffering believers, waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus. To such, and to such only, does the text apply in the way of comfort: not to the ungodly, whether in affliction or prosperity. To them it seems rather to carry a solemn warning.

How sad is your case when trouble comes! Afflicted, yet not among those whom the Apostle would count happy, because not *enduring* aright. You have not yet carried your greatest burden of all, your *sins*, to Christ, and sought deliverance through His blood; you have not tried to cast your present burdens, whatever they may be, upon the Lord, believing that He careth for you; you are not bearing what He has laid upon you, in the spirit of a child submitting to a Father's will; not asking for grace from above, not seeking comfort where alone it can be found. You have a great change to undergo, ere you can take to yourselves the comfort of such a text as this: you have to seek reconciliation with God through

Jesus Christ. Do not deceive yourselves with the notion, that, because you suffer here, you *must* be happy hereafter. If you would have, like Job, a happy end, you must like him abhor yourself, and repent in dust and ashes, and betake yourselves to the Saviour of sinners. Then you will find that the Lord is indeed 'very pitiful and of tender mercy;' for He will receive you graciously, forgive you all the past, give you comfort in trouble, and admit you to share at last the happy end of the righteous.

But are you without trouble? Do not think yourselves happy on that account, if not at peace with God. Think of those words, 'the end of the Lord.' The Lord will put an end to the prosperity of the ungodly, as well as to the trials of the righteous. Yes, 'the end of all things is at hand;'<sup>\*</sup> the point, beyond which God will not bear with hardness of heart, carelessness, or indecision; the end of prosperity, the end of calls, the end of warnings, the end of all things temporal, and the beginning of eternity. Will you remain undecided still? Will you run the risk of waiting too long? Happy is it, that the Lord is 'very pitiful and of tender mercy,' even to the *worst*; and that

<sup>\*</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 7.

even now it is a day of grace, in which all who seek mercy in Christ may find it. But it will not be so always. 'When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door,'\* then, no more mercy or grace for those who shall be found impenitent; nothing but a place of suffering, compared with which Job's utmost misery was happiness; a place without patience, without hope, without end. Oh! run not so fearful a risk. Lay not up for yourselves bitter and endless remorse. But 'seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near;'+ and make sure of having the Lord Jesus, in all trouble, 'as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'‡

\* Luke, xiii. 25.    † Isa. lv. 6.    ‡ Ib. xxxii. 2.

## SERMON XVII.

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### THE WAITING TIME.

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ACTS, I. 10, 11.—‘ And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel ; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven.’

THESE heavenly messengers did not mean to blame the Apostles, as though they did wrong in thus gazing after their departed Lord. Could they do otherwise than follow Him with their eyes as He went up ? Could their eyes and their thoughts be bent earthwards, while He went heavenwards ? Was it not natural and right, that, even when the cloud had received Him out of their sight, they should still stand with their eyes fixed on the spot, where that beloved form had last been seen ? They

are not blamed for gazing after Him, but only reminded that they must not gaze as if He were gone for ever, or be forgetful of His promises and His work: 'This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.' Their eyes had seen Him go; so surely should they see Him come again: but not yet; there was a space of time, longer or shorter, to be passed meanwhile. The very mention of His coming again might well recall to their minds, how He himself had told them to employ this interval, 'Watch and pray;'\* 'Occupy till I come;'+ 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.'‡ Never must they lose sight of the bright hope that lay before them, never forget the work that was given them to do.

It is so with us also. We look back upon our Lord's going; we look forward to His coming; and this very life which we are now passing, is the space between. We are not left in ignorance how to spend it. He has given 'to every man his work,'§ and told us plainly how to think and act in His absence.

\* Mark, xiii. 33.

† Luke, xix. 13.

‡ Mark, xvi. 15.

§ Matt. xiii. 34.

It has been a long absence. The intervals between the other great events concerning our Lord were but short: little more than thirty years passed between His birth and His death, there were but three days between His death and resurrection, and after forty days more He ascended: but eighteen hundred years and more have rolled away since His ascension, and still have those words to be fulfilled, 'This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen Him go into heaven.' Yet He *will* come. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away.'\* On that day of which no man knoweth,† but which is fixed already in the counsels of God, 'The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.'‡ And, in one most important sense, He *does* already come to us, one by one, as death calls each person hence: with that person the interval is ended.

How then is this interval to be spent?

1. In looking up into heaven. Our Lord is there, our treasure is there, our home is there;

\* Matt. xxiv. 35.

† Ib. v. 36.

‡ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

and there should our hearts be too.\* We must follow our Lord thither in thought, and seek to dwell with Him by spiritual communion. Our affections should be set 'on things above, not on things on the earth;' † and our temper and disposition should prove, where our thoughts chiefly are. Christ is our High Priest above: He has entered within the veil on our behalf; as our Mediator, Intercessor, and Forerunner. There He lives to make intercession for us, there He pleads our cause, there He is our Saviour still. Never does He forget or overlook us: never for one moment, since the cloud received Him, has His eye been off His Church; and the humblest member of it shares in this watchful love. Let us look up to Him there! With such a Friend, why should we ever feel friendless? What good thing can we want, while Jesus appears in the presence of God for us, ‡—a risen, living Saviour; gone to prepare a place for us; loving us, watching over us, helping us,—and engaged to do so till the time come, when He will take us to Himself? In this respect, we should be more like the men of Galilee than we are, and be often gazing up into heaven with the eye of faith.

\* Matt. vi. 21.    † Col. iii. 2.    ‡ Heb. ix. 24.



2. But, like them, we must not look up only. While we look up to heaven as the place where Christ is, we must also look down on earth, as the place where our work for Him lies. Most people err in looking down too much, and up too little : but some perhaps, whose minds are truly spiritual, regard earthly duties too little. So earnestly do they desire 'to depart and to be with Christ,'\* that they too much think of this present life as nothing but a weary space lying between them and their desires. This also is a fault ; for our Lord has given 'to every man his work,' and in that work expects to see him engaged. Does not our work lie all around us ? Can any one say with truth, 'There is nothing for me to do for Christ ?' Rather, can we turn our eyes in any direction, far or near, and not see His work spread out before our view ? And, further, has not each Christian his own peculiar sphere ? Is there not for every servant, some work which *he*, more than all others, seems called to do, and which, if left undone by him, may not be done at all ? This earth is our working-field for Christ, and this life our working-time. Each of us has his own ground, and his own time. None must be idle ; none

\* Phil. i. 23.

must shut his eyes to his work ; none must covet another's task, and neglect his own. Let each take the task his Master has set him, and love it for his Master's sake ; and, humble as the sphere may be, and different the work from what he would have chosen for himself, let the servant hear his Lord saying to him about that very work, ' Occupy till I come.'

3. Again, in one sense, we ought to look *back*. Not like one who, having put his hand to the plough,\* looks back with regret on what he has left ; nor in such a way as to go against St. Paul's rule of ' forgetting those things which are behind,' and pressing forward towards the mark.† In these senses we are *not* to look back. But we should look back on our lost estate by nature, and on our redemption by Christ, in order that we may never forget that we ' are bought with a price.' ‡ All that we once were, —our thoughtlessness, vanity, and self-will ; our wasted years, our misused talents, neglected opportunities ; all this we should look back upon, that we may magnify the riches of God's forbearance, long-suffering, and grace. And

\* Luke, ix. 62.

† Phil. iii. 13, 14.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

all that our Saviour did for us,—His life, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension—these too we should look back upon, that faith and love may be kindled afresh in our hearts.

4. Nor must we fail to look *within*. In vain shall we look up to heaven, and down to earth, and back to the past, if we do not look also into our own hearts. It is to be feared, that, amid the bustle of the world, and especially in these stirring times, there is much neglect among Christians of thoughtful retirement and self-examination. Yet, time thus spent is not *lost*. Far from it. The lamp will not burn brightly in public, unless often filled in private; the active and zealous Christian will not work really well, if he neglect communion with his own heart and with God. ‘Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still,’ \* is as much the word of God, as ‘Occupy till I come.’ Neither must be neglected for the other, but each observed in its place. The tradesman who should neglect to examine from time to time the state of his business, would be likely soon to find his affairs in a bad state. And it is just so with our souls: we cannot know their state

\* Ps. iv. 4.

without often looking within; we cannot be aware of our faults, our snares, our dangers, and our wants, unless we keep up the habit of faithful self-examination.

5. Once more, we must look *forward*. A miserable infidel once said in the prospect of death, 'I am going to take a leap in the dark.' And the sinful and worldly, though not professed unbelievers, have a prospect little less gloomy and uncertain. They have no solid ground on which to stand, no clear belief, no scriptural hope; in a word, they have no Saviour, made their own by faith: and without a Saviour, how can they look forward in peace? Far different is it with the Christian. It does not make him unhappy, to find strength failing and powers declining. Even though animal spirits may flag, and natural cheerfulness be not equal to what it was in younger days, yet he has inward peace, because he can look forward in faith, and see before him a bright and sure prospect. His lot may be a troubled one, yet even trouble does but teach him that this is not his rest. The more trouble he meets with in life, the more is his heart drawn to that life to come, where trouble will be no more.

*There* is his home; *here* he is but a stranger and pilgrim.

How cheering to all true disciples, in every age, are the angels' words, 'This same Jesus. . . shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven!' Jesus will come again; 'this same Jesus;' the merciful and loving Saviour; Jesus, who went about doing good, who was crucified, who rose again, and went up into heaven; Jesus, the object of their faith, the source and centre of all their hopes, on whose past history they have so often dwelt, on whose grace and mediation they have constantly relied, whom having not seen they love,\*—'this same Jesus' will come again, and receive them unto Himself, that where He is, there they may be also. *When* He will come, they know not, nor *how*: it may be that they will live to see Him appear 'in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory;' or it may be, that they will long lie wasting on a sick bed, and that in the stillness and sadness of that darkened room, Jesus will come to them by death. But they know He *will* come; and they rejoice in the thought. For, come when or how He may, He will come to take them *to Himself*; and

\* 1 Pet. i. 8.

thenceforth it will be their happy portion to be 'at home with the Lord,' for ever with Him whom they love best, safe under His care, happy in His smile, blest with His perfect approbation. Whatever now causes them trouble or pain, will have no place there; and what now makes them happiest, they will have there in perfection; on all those who love His appearing shall be bestowed a crown of righteousness, and the fulness of joy for evermore.

How strange, that even believers should need to be continually reminded to turn their eyes this way! That the very heirs of such an inheritance should often let the attractions or the troubles of the way fill their minds, instead of so bright an end! What would be our answer, if suddenly asked, 'Have you thought of heaven to-day? Has the coming of the Lord been this day in your thoughts? Have you been looking forward?' Let us not forget that it is one chief mark of Christ's true disciples that they are waiting and watching for Him, and that they *love* His appearing. Christ says, 'Surely, I come quickly;' and the answer of their hearts is, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

\* Rev. xxii. 20.

Thus have we seen, in some few particulars, how this interval should be passed by us. We should look *upwards* by faith, to see our Lord; *downwards* on earth, to find our work; *back* on our own ruin, and the redemption of Christ; *within*, to know our hearts; and *forward*, to heaven and home. If we did indeed thus wait for our Lord, we should be Christians of a far different stamp from that of most who bear the name: spiritually minded, yet practical; diligent and conscientious, yet resting all on Christ; the busiest about His work on earth, and yet the most intent upon His coming in glory. Ages have passed since the angels' words were spoken; and long since has the promise, in one sense, been made good to those early disciples. For though they have yet to see the Lord Jesus come in like manner as they saw Him go,—still, as the appointed work of each was finished, their Master came to them by death, and took them to rest. Meanwhile theirs was no quiet waiting-time. Peace indeed they did enjoy, inward peace, their Saviour's parting gift; but they had war without: all of them endured hardness, and most died the martyr's death. But now they are at rest with God: and, when our Lord shall come, 'even so them also which

sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him.' \*  
May *we* also, through grace, be faithful unto death ; waiting for our Lord's return, with our loins girded, and our lamps burning ! 'Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching.' †

\* 1 Thess. iv. 14.

† Luke, xii. 37.



## SERMON XVIII.

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### CASTING CARE UPON GOD.

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1 PET. v. 7.—‘ Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.’

How many things arise to make us careful and troubled! How often is the heart heavy, through the fear of coming evil! How common is an anxious state of mind! But is this right? Ought a Christian to be thus anxious?

There are several texts which show us very plainly that he ought not. St. Paul writes to the Philippians, ‘ Be careful [or anxious] for nothing.’\* Our Lord taught the same lesson when He said, ‘ And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; neither be ye of doubtful mind;’ or, as the margin has it, ‘ live

\* Phil. iv. 6.

not in careful suspense.' \* But there is no text which is stronger against anxiety than our present one, because it not only forbids it, but tells us what to do with our cares when they arise, and why; 'Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.'

Anxiety therefore is not right. We need not, and we ought not to, be anxious. It shows a doubtful mind, and a will only partly conformed to the will of God. It is not easy indeed to overcome it, especially to such as are naturally of an anxious turn; but such should be the Christian's aim; and there is no greater help against anxiety, than to try to cast our care upon God.

There are two parts here; the exhortation, and the motive. We will take the latter first.

1. 'He careth for you:' this is given as the reason or motive for casting all our care upon God.

How pleasant it is, to know this of a human friend! What a comfort, when we are in trouble, to go and tell it to one who cares for us, and feels for us, and takes a kind interest in our concerns! Such a friend is a friend

\* Luke, xii. 29.

indeed. Often have we gone to such an one sad and downcast, and come away cheered and comforted. Yet perhaps he gave us no help, for he could give none; our trouble was beyond his reach, he could do nothing for us. What was it then, that made us come away comforted? We saw that he *cared* for us; he took our trouble in part upon himself; his look of feeling, his tearful eye, his gentle voice, and kind words, did us good; we did cast part of our care upon him, and were relieved.

We have a friend in heaven, who cares for us far more than any earthly friend does; God cares for us. He knows every grief and fear of ours before we tell Him, and feels for us in all. He takes a kind interest in all that concerns us. Nothing that happens to us is a matter of indifference to this kind Friend. The peculiarities of our situation, the things which no human friend knows, our secret fears and misgivings, the little things as well as the great,—He knows and cares for them all. Nothing is too small, or too common, or too trifling (as some would call it), to escape His notice and care, if only it concern our comfort or good.

The thing that comes nearest to this, is the watchful care of a parent. How a fond mother

notices every look of her child ! How quickly she perceives if anything is amiss ! How ready she is to hear the tale of trouble, to comfort, and to help ! But God's love is greater than even a mother's. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.'\* A mother's love is not perfect, but God's is ; her care, even for her own child, may be wearied and worn out, but God's never can be. 'He careth for you.' At all times, in all places, under all circumstances. When earthly friends have ceased to care, God cares for you still. Every day, and every moment, His watchful care is over you. He never forgets or overlooks. More than the dearest friend you have, more even than a mother for her child, God careth for you.

Consider who it is, that thus cares for you. I spoke of the comfort of finding a friend to care for us, though he may not be able to help us. But this does not apply to God ; for He *can* help us. He is the Almighty, Eternal God ; who made all things and orders all things. His power is infinite. There is nothing He cannot do. Everything that happens is ordered or

\* Isa. xlix. 15.

controlled by Him. He made the world, He said, 'Let there be light : and there was light.'\* And still, He has but to say the word, and light appears in the midst of the darkest trouble, and the poor are lifted up, and difficulties are removed, and the most unlikely things are brought to pass. How wonderful, that the great God, to whom angels in heaven bow down, should condescend to care for *us* ! How wonderful, and how comforting ! What can harm us, if HE care for us ? What have we to fear, if He be on our side ? With an all-seeing eye ever over us, and an Almighty arm around us, why should an anxious thought ever find place in our minds ?

Christians ! believe these simple words, 'He careth for you.' Take them as simply and as fully as they are written. They are God's words, and God's words to *you*. Do not doubt them. Why should you ? If an earthly friend were to tell you he cared for you, and were to give you besides many proofs of his care, you would readily believe him. And will you not believe God, who has told you so plainly that He cares for you, and shows you so every day ? Oh ! take home to your hearts, without a doubt or

\* Gen. i. 3.

fear the comforting assurance, 'He careth for you.'

2. And now we come to the exhortation that springs from this, 'Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.' I have called it an exhortation, but it is also an invitation, a kind and gracious invitation. God allows us, invites us, and exhorts us, to cast all our care upon Him; and gives us this reason, that He careth for us.

How large and free is this invitation! 'Casting *all* your care upon Him.' The kindest friend on earth would hardly invite us thus. Already God has invited us to cast all our *sins* on Jesus Christ, who bore them in His own body on the tree; and now He invites us to cast our *cares* upon Him. Sins and cares, —we may follow the same plan with them both, the only plan that can give us rest from either. There is no peace from guilt, except in casting the burden in faith on the Lord Jesus; there is no rest from care, save in casting it all upon God, believing His word.

Let us mark that word, *all*. When Hezekiah, in his fear and trouble, went up to the House of God, he did not merely read an extract from

the letter of the king of Assyria, but ‘spread it before the Lord.’\* So we are invited to spread our troubles before the Lord; to keep nothing back; to open to Him our most secret thoughts, even those thoughts and fears which we have never owned to a fellow-creature, and hardly to ourselves: not ashamed, because the reason of our anxiety seems trifling, or because a human friend might blame us for groundless fears; but opening *all* before God,—our private feelings, our petty troubles, and even our groundless fears,—assured that He will not despise or disregard them, because He careth for us.

But we are to do more than merely *tell* our cares to God; we are invited to cast them upon Him. Now, we cannot cast a thing on another, and yet keep it ourselves. God means by this invitation to rid us of our anxiety. He is willing, not only (which is all an earthly friend can do) to sympathize with us, but to relieve us. Our Saviour taught us this when He said, ‘Therefore take no thought [or, have no anxiety] saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth

\* 2 Kings, xix. 14.

that ye have need of all these things.\* We are to put off all anxiety, trusting to the knowledge, power, and love of God ; and thus to cast all our care upon Him.

Do you say, This would be presumptuous ? Nay, not so, when God invites. It cannot be presumption, to believe what God says, to accept His invitation, to do what He bids : and He has said, ‘ Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.’

Or do you say, It would be useless ? Consider again who invites you. ‘ Is anything too hard for the Lord ?’† Has He not *all* things under His control,—all things, all circumstances, all hearts ? Can He not ‘ save by many, or by few ?’‡ Can He not bring good out of evil ? And has He not *promised*, that all things shall work together for good to them that love Him ?§ You are not to enquire *how* He will relieve you, —by what means, or at what time. You are not to seek to know this, or you will not be casting *all* your care upon God. Leave that to Him. Enough for you, that He hath said : ‘ and shall He not do it ?’||

\* Matt. vi. 31, 32. † Gen. xviii. 14. ‡ 1 Sam. xiv. 6.  
§ Rom. viii. 28. || Num. xxiii. 19.



Alas! how far below their privilege do the children of God live! How many an anxious face betrays, that *all* the care is not cast upon God! Poor weak human nature; how it clings to its own troubles! How hard a thing is this, that seems so easy and so comfortable,—to cast our care upon God! What is wanting? More *faith*. A real and simple belief of God's word, and a firm trust in it. The prayer of the anxious ought to be, 'Increase our faith!'<sup>\*</sup> An excellent man wrote as follows, in a letter to a friend, 'Then put everything into God's hands every moment. Cast every care upon Him, and say,—“There! *that* is disposed of”—and repeat it, till you are satisfied it is true. For it will return again and again. If you are determined to believe,—depend on it, unbelief will make it sufficiently troublesome to you. But endeavour to empty the mind,—to relieve, to unburden, the mind, as often as ever it is loaded and cramped with anything. And having exerted this act of faith, stretch out the limbs of your soul, and feel that you are at rest. Look to the covenant, and see that the Lord hath provided bountifully for all possible wants; and take the comfort of it. Then your posture will be rest, and your

<sup>\*</sup> Luke, xvii. 5.

pillow easy : and every time this exertion of faith is made, the rest will be more conscious, and the repose longer, till it comes to be as complete and habitual as in the present state is attainable.\*

But if even believers in general lose much comfort through the weakness of their faith, and carry many a care about with them which they might freely cast upon God,—what do the ungodly do in anxiety and trouble? What rock have they to flee to, what friend to whom they may open all their sorrows, what inward spring of peace and comfort? Alas, none. As long as prosperity lasts, they may enjoy a sort of peace (though false and hollow at the best) without God; but when the day of trouble comes, and things look dark around them, and anxious thoughts arise, then they feel a need which the world cannot supply.

Do any such hear or read these words? Let me apply them to you. What refuge have you against the day of trouble? Where do you seek comfort, when cares press on you? Cares and troubles *will* come, though you may be free from them now. Would it not be well, to

\* *Correspondence of Rev. J. T. Nottidge*, p. 110.

have a *friend* ready? Such a friend is God; an unfailing, untiring friend; a friend at all times, but most so in time of trouble, because then most wanted; a Friend, a Father, a Saviour, a Comforter; and willing to be all this to every one who will seek Him in truth. Will *you* not seek Him?

There is one trouble which you have, the greatest of all, though it may cause you little uneasiness now,—your sins. As long as they are unforgiven, they ought to make you anxious, more anxious than any other thing whatever: yet perhaps you have no anxiety at all on this score. But remember, it will not always be so. The great day of judgment is coming. Oh! what a day of trouble and fear will that be to the unpardoned! What a weight of care will then rest upon them! How anxious, how downcast, how terrified, will they be! But even *this* care you are invited now to cast upon God. Jesus Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree; He will take all your guilt away, if you seek Him now. *Now*,—I repeat the word. Not *then*, but *now*. Now is the accepted time; then it will be too late. Lay this seriously to heart; and consider, that even now God, in His great mercy and forbearance,

'careth for you,' and calls you by His grace, and is perfectly willing to forgive and accept you for Christ's sake, and to be your friend for ever. Is this a thing to be passed unheeded by ?

## SERMON XIX.

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### THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

A SERMON FOR AUTUMN.

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ISA. LXIV. 6 (part).—‘ We all do fade as a leaf.’

THE change of seasons has again brought us to the fall of the leaf. It seems but lately that we were watching the opening buds of spring, and seeing the trees gradually become clothed. But since then, summer has come and gone, harvest is over, and autumn will soon give place to winter. The trees are again losing their leaves ; some are already bare, and the rest are fast thinning. Every day makes a change, every night strews the paths afresh, every wind that blows scatters more leaves.

This does not surprise us ; we know it must be so. Every one expects the leaf to fall at this

season. We are sure beforehand, because it always has been so, that the woods will first get brown, and then begin to shed their leaves, and at length become bare. Some kinds of trees sooner and some later, but all in time. I do not here speak of evergreens ; because, though they too shed their leaves, yet in them we do not notice it, from their not losing them all at one season like other trees.

The prophet here likens us to the fading leaf ; ‘ We all do fade as a leaf.’ Just as the leaf changes its colour, fades, withers, and falls, so man loses his strength and dies. His season is not in general so short as that of the leaf ; man’s *life* is his year ; yet that life is longer or shorter, just as some leaves fall early and some late. But the life of man does come to a close sooner or later, and then is his fall of the leaf. It must be so. It cannot be altered. It ought to be no surprise. The death of man is as much God’s law as the fall of the leaf.

‘ We all do fade as a leaf.’ Mark that word, *all*. Most rules have their exceptions ; this has none. All, without exception, do thus fade and die. We look at a wood, now half leafless, and we feel sure that every leaf that is left must fall. Even should a stray leaf, here

and there, stand winter's frosts and storms, and hang on till next spring, still it must fall at last. So it is with mankind; all must die. And though some are strong, and live to a great age, and see their friends drop off, and live on still, yet at length their time will come too. They may outlive their generation; they cannot outlive their appointed time. They may enjoy 'a green old age,' but they must wither and fall at last. 'We *all* do fade as a leaf.'

*We* all,—mark also that word, '*We*.' It is not, *They* all, but *We* all. This brings the matter home to us; thus the text applies itself. It is very important to notice this; for some, when they meet with such a text as this, seem to read it, '*They* all; all but I;' applying the words to all but themselves. And they read the course of God's providential dealings just as they read His word. They see others fall on this side and on that; they think and speak of friends and neighbours as sure to die. When they see the infirmities of age creeping on one, 'Ah!' cry they, 'his time is drawing to a close.' But they do not consider their own failing strength, or dim sight, or dulness of hearing. They even look perhaps at the young

and healthy, and think that they, too, must die some day; but they have no such thoughts about themselves. Some will even calculate on the death of another, and consider what change for better or worse it will make to them, forgetting that *they* must die too, and may die *first*.—But the text says, ‘*We* all;’ and thus we ought to read it. We are not mere lookers-on, watching others die, as we watch the falling leaf. We are as sure to die as they are, and God only knows whose time will come first.

‘We all do fade,’ might perhaps be read, ‘We all *are fading*.’ Certainly it is true of many, that their fading time has begun already. It is a common expression for those who have passed middle age, ‘They have begun to go downhill;’ and this is much the same as to say, ‘They have begun to fade.’ Even the leaf is generally long in fading; it loses its green, and begins to wither, some time before it falls; but we know what will follow, when once we see it begin to turn brown. Thus there is generally a fading time with men before they fall. As years creep on, they find themselves not so active or strong as they used to be, they are sooner tired, sight and hearing



are not what they were. What does this mean, but that they are fading? And what does it foreshow, but that in no long time they will fall? Alas! all do not understand it so. They read the leaves better than they read themselves. 'If I could but get rid of my cough,' says one old man, 'I should soon be better.' 'If it weren't for this stiffness in my limbs,' says another, 'there wouldn't be much the matter with me.' 'I can't think what makes my hearing so bad,' says a third. Our Saviour said of some of old, 'Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?'

\* So it might be said to such as these,—You watch the fading leaf, and know that soon it must fall, but have you no eyes for your own fading? You know the meaning of the change in the trees, from green to brown, and from thick to thin; can you not trace in like manner the signs in yourselves? The old man's cough, the stiffness of limbs, the dulness of hearing, are like the fading of the leaf before it falls; they are signs of death drawing near; they come with a message from God, 'We all do fade as a leaf.'

\* Matt. xvi. 3.

But *all* leaves do not *thus* fade ; some fall without fading. An April shower will break off some of the opening buds, a summer storm will scatter some green leaves. In like manner some men die young, and others are cut off in the prime of life. It may be by pining sickness, or it may be by a sudden stroke ; but, in such cases, there is no failing of the powers through old age : these are like a leaf that falls without fading, or fades before its time. And thus the text applies, not only to those who are getting old, but to the young and strong too. The youngest may early fade, the strongest may be taken without warning ; even if not, their time will come at length. It is still true, ' We *all* do fade as a leaf.'

Now what is the great lesson to be learnt from this certain truth ? If our life be thus like the season of the leaf,—the change and the fall sure to come, and perhaps before we think,—how should such a life be spent ? Before this question can be answered properly, we must take into account one thing more ; that, though we *fade* as a leaf, we are not like a leaf in other respects. The leaf fades, falls, decays, and is no more. It may serve, in the wonderful order of nature, to give nourishment

either to the tree that bore it, or to other plants, and thus help to bring forth fresh leaves another season, but that very leaf will be a leaf no more. Not so with us. We fall, and die, and go to corruption, like a leaf; but the *soul* does not die; and even the body, in the great day of resurrection, will rise again and be once more joined to the soul, to live for ever, happy or miserable, in the world to come. How then ought we to live here?

1. We ought to bear in mind the fading, the fall, the great change, and the life to come; and not to live, as if we were placed here for ever. We have no lease of life; we are but tenants at will, the will of God. Our plans therefore ought not to be formed, as if we were sure to live to carry them out: we ought to sit loose to the things of time and sense, knowing that soon we shall be called to give them up; how soon, we know not.—Alas! many live as if this life were to last for ever. Blind to all the signs around and within them,—the change of seasons, and the falling leaf; death coming to friends and neighbours, and perhaps into their own house; sickness seizing one person, infirmity creeping on

another, years advancing with all ; themselves growing older every year, and perhaps already beginning to feel the weakness of old age ; blind to all this, they plan, and scheme, and think, and speak, as if there were no end, no death, at hand. We are not meant to live thus. These tokens and signs are given in very mercy, in order that we may remember that God hath made our days ‘as an hand-breadth.’ The Psalmist prayed, ‘Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is ; that I may know how frail I am.’\* It was a good and wise prayer ; not for him only, but for all ; for we do too much forget how frail we are.

2. We ought to live always prepared for the great change. All will allow that they ought to be prepared ; but most seem to think, that it is not necessary to be *always* prepared. They are shocked at the thought of dying unprepared ; but seem to think the work of preparation to be a work for the future, not for the present : they mean to prepare, but not *now*. This is not safe, It is not for this that such warnings are written, ‘We all do fade as a leaf.’ We must be *always*

\* Ps. xxxix. 4, 5.

prepared, or we are never safe. The fading may be going on, while we are not aware; without our knowledge, some inward disease may be preying upon us, which may carry us off in a moment. Or the fall may come without any fading: as a storm shakes down the green leaf, so death may suddenly come upon us without disease. Besides, is the time of fading the proper time for doing the most important work of life? When strength is failing, and the mind is weakened by disease, and the body perhaps disturbed by painful days and sleepless nights,—is this the time to which we ought to put off preparing for eternity? No. If we would read aright the lesson of the fading leaf, we must not put off this great work, but begin *now*, and live *always* prepared. ‘Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.’ \*

Our Lord Himself has made our peace by His own precious blood. He died to reconcile sinners to God. He invites us to believe, and be saved. Thus, we may live always prepared; pardoned, reconciled, justified, accepted; with no sin unforgiven, no guilt on our conscience, because sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. Let

\* Matt. xxiv. 42.

none 'neglect so great salvation !' \* Let none put off to the future the work of to-day ; ' Behold, *now* is the accepted time ; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.' †

3. We ought to make the most of our time, while it lasts, for doing the work which God has given us to do. The first work for all is to seek salvation, to secure the one thing needful, to make sure of a part in Christ. But, besides this, God has set other work before us ; work for His glory, and for the good of others. Every Christian should be a worker for God. What particular work each is to do, must depend upon the circumstances in which God has placed him, and the means which God has given him : but *some* work for God is set before all.

The time for doing this work, whatever it may be, is *life* ; this present short and fleeting life. ' There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.' ‡ Our Lord Himself said, ' I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day ; the night cometh, when no man can work.' § Yes ! the night cometh to us also. Time is

\* Heb. ii. 3.    † 2 Cor. vi. 2.    ‡ Eccles. ix. 10.

§ John, ix. 4.

passing away, with all its means and opportunities; every day makes our working time shorter; with many, strength is already failing, they cannot do what they once could; the end is drawing near, the night in which no man can work. How earnest should we be, while our day lasts! How anxious to make the most of our time! It will never come again.

Let these words of the text remain fixed in your minds. And when you stand admiring the rich colours of the autumn wood, or notice the branches gradually becoming bare, remember the lesson they teach, 'We all do fade as a leaf;' and think of your frailty, your souls, and your work. Old and young—you who are failing, and you who are strong—think seriously of these words. Seriously, yet not sadly. For there is no sadness in a change, if that change be for the better; and we need not fear to fade and fall, if we have a sure hope of a brighter rising, and a more lasting and happy life. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and

undefiled, and that fadeth not away.’\* Oh ! seek that hope and that inheritance for your own,—a good hope, an unfading inheritance,—and then you need fear no change. Only,—let the falling leaf remind you to seek *in time* ; ‘Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found ; call ye upon Him while He is near.’ †

\* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

† Isa. lv. 5.



## SERMON XX.

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### SPIRITUAL SLEEP.

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MARK, XIII. 36.—‘Lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping.’

THE Bible is full of warnings; no spiritual danger lies in our path, of which we have not full notice there. If we did but give heed to the Word of God, we could not be taken by surprise as to our souls. Thus it has always been in God’s dealings with men. The world before the flood was warned, Lot’s sons-in-law were warned, the people of Nineveh were warned, the Jewish nation was warned. And so it is still. No Christian who falls into a snare, no careless person overwhelmed with confusion at the coming of Christ, no sinner ruined for ever through sin, will be able to say, ‘I had no

warning.' Day after day, warnings come to us. They are written in the Word of God, they are seen in His providence, they may be found in many of the commonest things that happen. Alas! that they should come to numbers, all in vain!

Here, in the text, is a warning of danger given by our Lord Himself. The danger is—not the coming of the Lord, but our being asleep when He comes. Far from there being anything to *fear* in His coming, it will be the happiest thing that ever befell us, if only we be awake and prepared. The danger is—lest, coming suddenly, He find us sleeping.

He *will* come suddenly. We have no reason to expect any further notice than such as He has given us already, and is giving us day by day. If He were to come *now*,—even while I am writing, or you reading or hearing,—it would indeed be a sudden coming, but not a coming without warning. And such, in truth, will His coming be. Men will be about their usual employments; on week-days, buying and selling, planning and labouring, marrying and giving in marriage; on the Lord's day, some meeting for worship, and some seeking their pleasure. Whatever changes the world may

yet undergo, and however the customs and employments of men may be altered,—things will be going on in their usual course, whatever that may be, when the Son of Man comes.

But, I repeat, even in His *sudden* coming, there is nothing to fear, if only we be found watching. Take the case of a true and earnest Christian; one who has fled for refuge to Jesus Christ, trusts in Him, loves Him, follows Him, and looks for His appearing. Why should such an one fear? Is there any danger to *him* in the coming of the Lord, whether sudden or expected? Surely not. It is what he looks for and longs for. It is what will complete his happiness. It is what his Master left as His parting promise when He went away; ‘I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.’\* There is nothing here to make him afraid, but rather everything to make him glad.—The danger is, lest any be found sleeping. The whole question of joy or sorrow, gain or loss, at the coming of Christ, depends on the state in which we are found,—ready or not ready, watching or sleeping.

But what does ‘sleeping’ mean here? This

\* John, xiv. 3.

may be learnt from the meaning of the opposite word, 'Watch.' In the parable which goes before the text, the master 'gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.' \* Now, if on his return he found the porter at his post and the servants at their work, all bearing in mind his command, doing his will, and making ready for his return,—then he would be satisfied ; they would be found *watching*, and all would be well. But, if on the other hand, any one of them should act in quite a different way, and (as St. Matthew has it) should say in his heart, 'My Lord delayeth His coming ; and should begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken,' †—this man would be doing the very opposite to *watching*, and, though perhaps active in evil, would properly be said to be *sleeping*, because not doing his master's will and preparing for his return.

To apply this to ourselves—every person is *sleeping*, in the sense of the text, who is not watching for the coming of Christ ; that is, who is not doing the work he has been set to do, and living in that state of heart and preparation, in which he has been told to live.

\* Mark, xiii. 34.

† Matt. xxiv. 48, 49.

How many then are sleeping ! Awake and active about a multitude of other things, but asleep as regards the coming of Christ. The person who lives in sin ; the worldly-minded, selfish and covetous ; he who wastes his time in the pursuit of pleasure ; the thoughtless and careless ; all these, as well as the idle and slothful, may be called sleepers. If the text had stood thus, ' Lest, coming suddenly, he find you *sinning*, ' all would have been ready to acknowledge the awfulness of being found *so*,—taken in the act, sinning at the very moment of His appearing. But this word ' sleeping, ' includes many who would be ill-pleased to be classed among the *sinning*. It takes in all who are not true and earnest servants of Christ ; and it speaks with a voice of warning even to those who are so—lest they also should fall into sloth or carelessness.

And now let me press this matter home to you, and ask—What is *your* state ? Are you watching or sleeping ?—You may be as much alive to religion as people in general, you may even pay more attention to it than most of your friends : but that is not the question. Judging yourselves by quite another rule, and fixing your thoughts on the coming of Christ,—which

are you, watching or sleeping, ready or not ready? Let me ask you further—for one question brings another—Are you now in earnest? Do you make your soul the first thing? Have you been brought to repentance? Have you betaken yourselves to the Friend of sinners, the only Saviour? Have you sought pardon and peace through His blood? Are you walking with God, and serving Christ? Thus, are you *ready*—ready to meet Christ, ready to die?

These are solemn questions, and such as few like to ask themselves; for people in general are not fond of the work of self-examination, and least of all on such subjects as these. Yet there is nothing more important than to know the state of our souls. Put these questions then to yourselves, honestly and sincerely; not merely to quiet conscience by going through the form of self-examination, but really to know how you stand with regard to the coming of Christ.

And while you do so, try to realise His coming. Do not think of it as a thing certainly far off, but imagine it to be close at hand. Figure to yourselves that you hear the sound of His approach, and see already the rending of the sky—another moment, and you will

stand before Him. And *then* ask yourselves, 'Am I watching? Am I ready?' Oh the folly and vanity of men's minds, that will not be persuaded thus to realise things to come! That refuse to think of certain things as certain, and real things as real, and sudden things as sudden! That will still be occupied with trifles, to the neglect of things of eternal importance! That, in numberless cases, will never think and act as if the Lord were coming, till the trumpet sound shall be heard! The only wise and true way of examining ourselves on this subject is to do it thus, as if the time were come. Some may think otherwise. 'I am not ready *now*,' they say, 'it is true; and if He were now to come, I fear He would find me sleeping: but I hope I *shall* be ready before the time arrives.' This is a mere delusion; there is no truth in such a hope, and no foundation for it. If you did really hope to be ready, would you not begin to prepare? And if it were indeed the desire of your heart to avoid the danger of being found sleeping, would you be content to remain for one moment longer as you are?—Besides, what is to change you? If not ready *now*, why should you be *then*? You are taking no steps towards it, you are living

contentedly unprepared, you are sleeping away your time: what is to happen to bring about a change? how shall you find if you do not seek? —‘But,’ you will reply, ‘I *mean* to change before then.’ ‘Mean!’ and ‘Then!’ These are not words to use on such a subject, they have no place here; our Lord shut them out altogether when He said, ‘Lest, coming *suddenly*.’ Be assured of this, that if you willingly sleep on, hoping to awake in time, the probability is—nay the *certainty*, unless a change be wrought which you do not seek and have no right to expect—that what you are *now*, such you will be *then*; and that, coming suddenly, He *will* find you sleeping. Now is the time to awake. To-day is the best of all days for beginning to prepare; the only day you can call your own; the one day of all others, which God says is ‘the day of salvation.’\* ‘Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!’†

I *might* urge you to this by a most solemn motive, to be drawn from one word in the text. I might set before you what is conveyed in this little word, ‘Lest:’ the terrible consequences of being found sleeping at the coming of Christ;

\* 2 Cor. vi. 2.

† Ephes. v. 14.



the startling surprise ; the fearful thought that all is lost ; the first dreadful sight of eternity ; the fear, remorse, and despair ; and then, the judgment, the sentence, the place of punishment. But I forbear. I trust your own thoughts will set these things before you, and remind you, more solemnly and closely than the words of another can do, what will be the consequence, if ‘ coming suddenly He find you sleeping.’

Thus far I have addressed the careless or undecided. Now, let the text be applied shortly to those who are neither careless nor undecided, and yet need a quickening word ; slothful and unwatchful Christians. Indeed, which of us is so diligent and watchful, as to stand in no need of being quickened ? Is there one who can say truly, ‘ I do not *want* this text ?’

Dear brethren, you have much that calls you to be watchful and diligent. You have your Master to serve, and your work to do ; you have your hearts to keep, your lips to guard, your conduct to order aright ; you have inward corruption to wrestle with, outward temptations and difficulties to meet ; there is the flesh to be crucified with the affections and lusts, the world to be overcome, the devil to be resisted ; grace

to be sought, wants to be supplied, the blood of sprinkling to be continually obtained. With all this, you have no time to lose, you cannot afford to be spiritually asleep, you must be up and doing. And, beside the motives which press upon people in general, there is one that will weigh more than any with those who love Christ; it is this: He whom you love, who died for you, called you by His grace, and gave you the knowledge of Himself in your hearts, *He* desires you to watch; these are His words, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!'<sup>\*</sup> Let love prevail to make you watchful. It is the Lord's *desire*, as well as His command, that, at whatever hour He come, He may find you doing His work and looking for His coming. Oh let Him see of the travail of His soul in you, and be satisfied! † Let Him see you His loving, waiting, watchful servants! There is wholesome warning in His words; but there is love in them too. He would have that a happy day to you. He would have it to be a blessed thing for you, either to die, or to see His appearing. He would have you among those who will *love* His appearing, and whose voice will join in the chorus of the redeemed, 'Lo, this is our God;

<sup>\*</sup> Mark, xiii. 37.

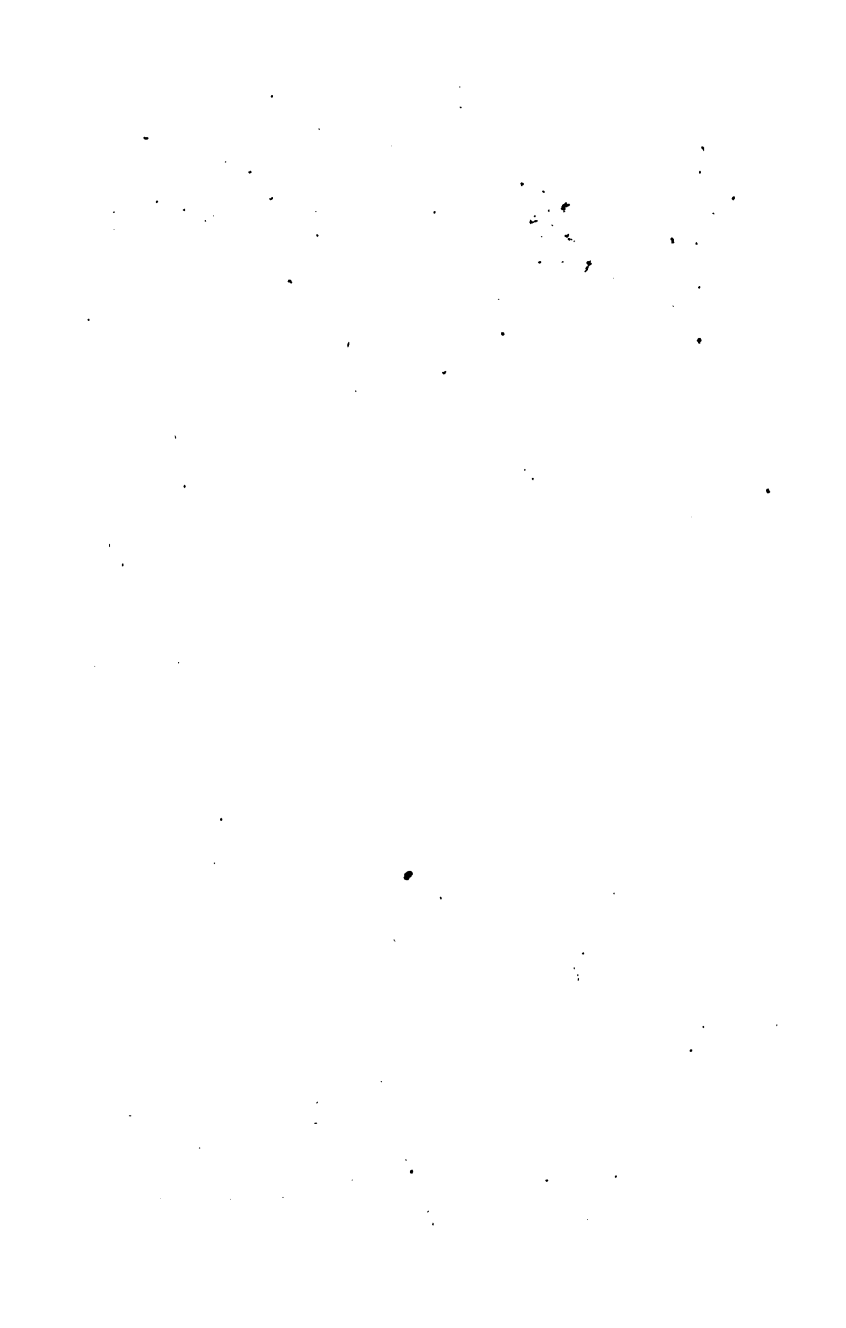
† Isa. liii. 11.

we have waited for Him, and He will save us.\*

As you love the Lord Jesus then, as you regard His wishes, as you desire to welcome Him with joy, be not slothful ; let not the spirit of slumber steal over you ; in prayer, in meditation, in self-examination, in the use of all the means of grace, in your daily walk, in public and private duties, be wakeful and diligent. Let the porter watch, let each servant be about his work, let the Master be in the hearts of all ; and then, even though He come suddenly, He will not find you sleeping.

\* Isa. xxv. 9.





the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has become a major employer in the UK, and its growth has been a major factor in the overall growth of the economy.

The public sector has also become a major provider of social services, and its growth has been a major factor in the overall growth of the economy. The public sector has become a major provider of social services, and its growth has been a major factor in the overall growth of the economy. The public sector has become a major provider of social services, and its growth has been a major factor in the overall growth of the economy.

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